SAMAYAL

The Pleasures of South Indian Vegetarian Cooking

WINNER
GOURMAND
World Cookbook Awards

viji varadarajan

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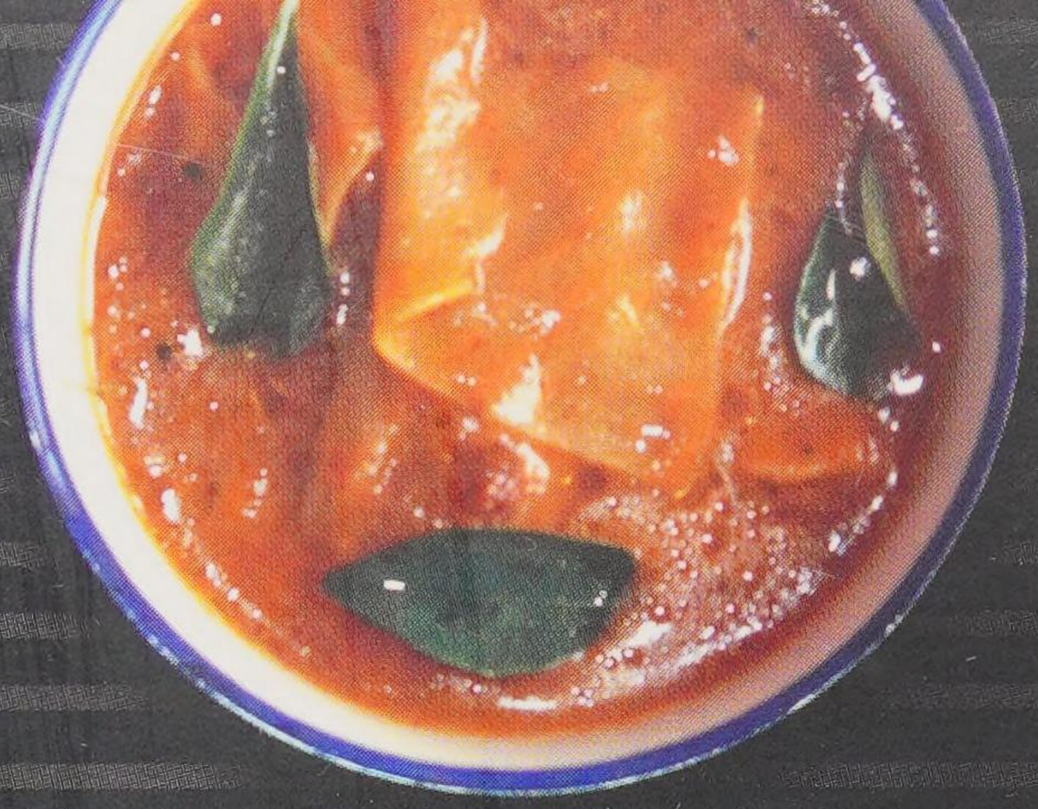
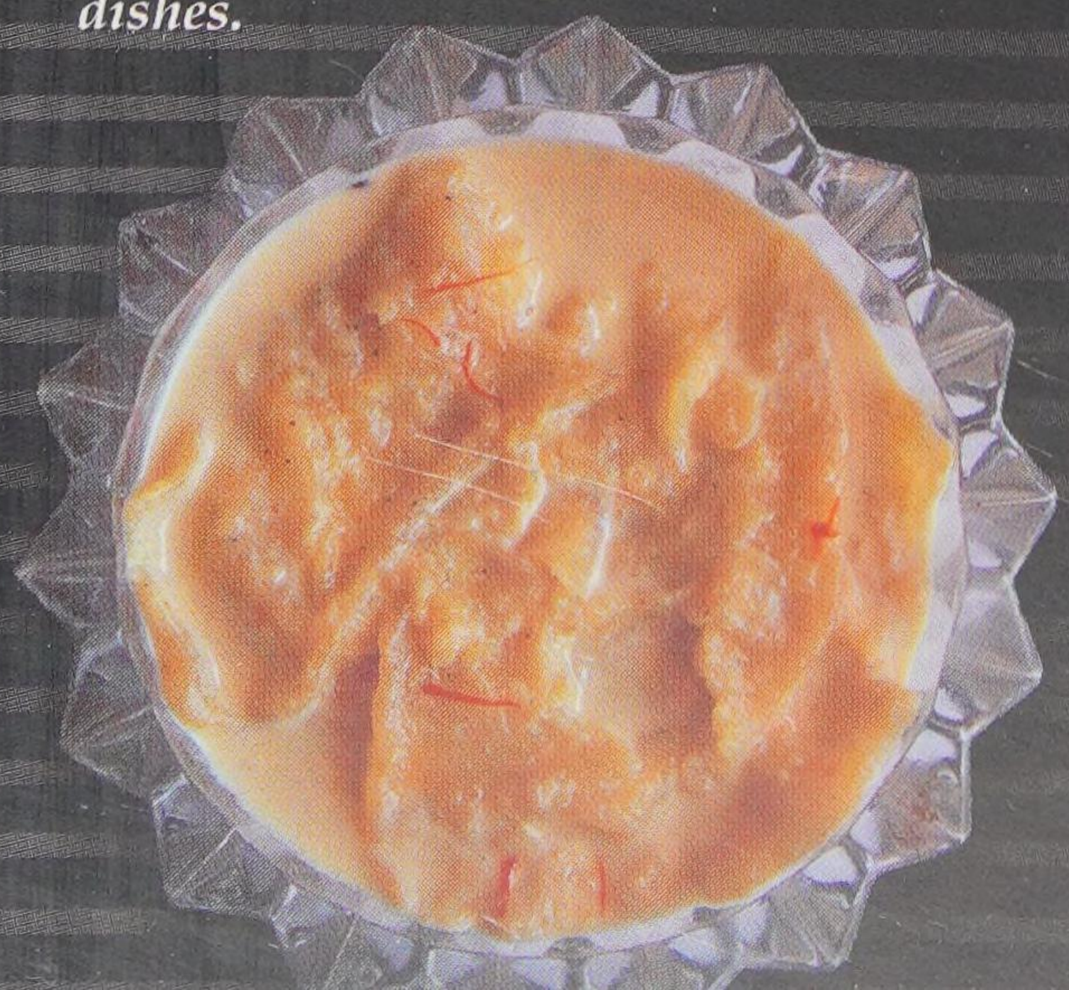


Cooking in any culture is based on family traditions that are handed down through generations. South Indian cuisine is mainly vegetarian and is based on the concept that food shapes the personality, mood and mind. A vegetarian die t fosters satvic qualities, calms the mind and is essential for spiritual progress. Food was always cooked with a great deal of attention to cleanliness; to the balancing of nutrition, flavour, texture and variety; and with the divine as the first taster of the day's meal.

The older generation in the modern world cling to their traditional dishes at mealtimes. Young people, due to reactionary sentiments, reject the routine and traditional meals served at home. All this is until they set up their own homes or migrate to foreign lands and then the homesickness sets in along with longings for mom's or grandmom's cooking. They hanker for simple food that was earlier rejected as 'yuckky' tiffins or boring daily dishes.



Viji Varadarajan's

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First publication - 2000
Fifth publication – 2007

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ISBN 81-7525-174-3

Author: Viji Varadarajan
Author's contact: vij51@yahoo.com

Published by: Orient Enterprises
New # 140, Peters Road
Royapettah, Chennai - 600 014
INDIA
Tel: 044-28524160/28525491

Photography: V.K. Rajamani & Sanjay Natarajan

Graphic Design: Vadivel Somasundaram

Edited by: Padmini Natarajan

Printed at: Ratna Offset Printers
40, Peters Road, Royapettah
Chennai - 600 014 INDIA

The greatest inspiration to write these books is my family and friends:

Rajaji my husband without whose encouragement and patience I would not have spent all those manic hours at my computer! He improvises and innovates a lot in his professional environment. That inspired me to use modern management methods and principles in the kitchen.

My gorgeous and darling daughters Vandana and Vinitha who have always appreciated and enjoyed the dishes I cook. Juggling between their professions and cooking, they have done a great job taking the cuisine with them to foreign lands to cook for their husbands Ram and Arjun and for my grandchildren Diya and Dhruva.

My dear friends Sharada Rajamani and V K Rajamani persuaded me to write the recipes for today's generation. I spent many productive hours on the phone and in person with VK when he photographed the dishes. His enthusiasm in arranging the props/icons and the décor was extremely enjoyable. Most of the icons are from his personal collection. VK always believed that the concept of divine food is very relevant to this cuisine. He is one of the most talented men I have ever met!

I would like to deeply thank Padmini Natarajan for the inputs she volunteered in the Palghat and Tanjore cuisine. Padmini is well versed in both traditions and motivated me in many ways to raise the bar in the writing of the recipes, methods, publication and publicity of the books. I thank young Nitila Natarajan for offering practical and useful suggestions from the younger generation's point of view.

I am grateful to Sanjay Natarajan for spending all those man-hours clicking away with his digital camera. I thank Somasundaram for his imaginative and effective graphic designing that has enhanced the divinity of this cuisine.

I acknowledge with love and gratitude all my dear friends and relatives who offered ideas and added colour to the recipes.

Viji Varadarajan

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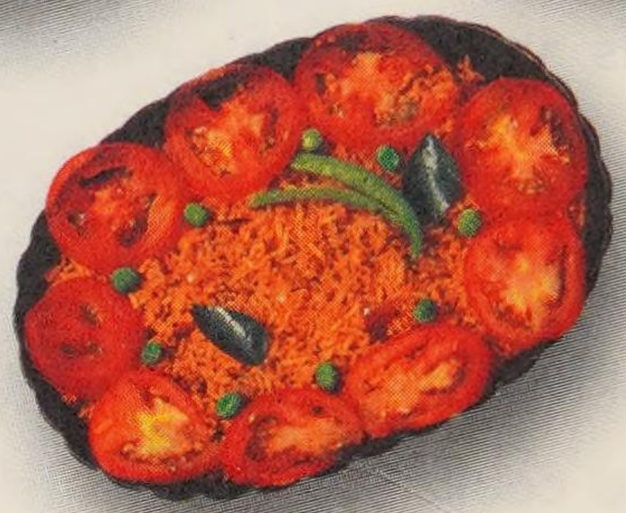

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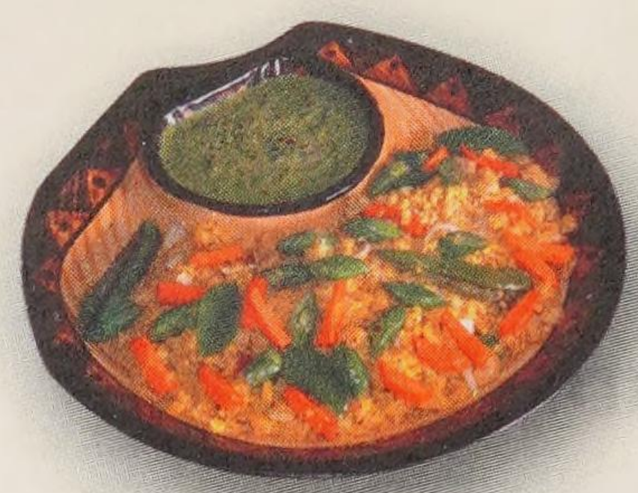

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The South Indian Brahmin Cuisine

It was the early hours before dawn. A feeble chimney lamp was burning in a niche in the courtyard inside the house. She woke up and as usual first made her way to the rear of the house, picked up a sombu (pot) of water and walked in the near darkness to the common land for her morning calls. Other women too joined her and then they took a bath in the river or temple pond. They washed the clothes, picked up a kodam (pot) or two of water and went home with their wet hair, dripping down their backs. She entered her home and her chores began by rekindling the lamp in the pooja room. She then carried the flame to the kitchen and laboriously started the wood fires under the blackened chimney using the oodukol or the blow pipe and bits of cow dung cakes. A pot of water was drawn from the well and the *vengalai paanai* (brass pot) was put on the fire and washed rice added to it. The washed tuvaram paruppu was put in the *kalchetti* (stone pan) and thus began the slow process of cooking. The cows had to be milked and the decoction for the morning coffee brewed. The faint lightening of the sky signalled the time for the morning ritual of washing down the front of the home with cow dung water and drawing the welcoming kolam.

She then went to the backyard that she had planted, watered and nourished and looked around for vegetables that she could use in her menu for the day. It may have been a handful of eggplant or lady's fingers. It could have been some part of the banana tree or a couple of drumsticks and its leaves. She may have picked up some greens spreading across the backyard or waited for the cry of the lady who brought fresh greens in a basket to her front door. If a pumpkin—white or red—was ready to pluck, then she would bring it in and slice it into bits and share it with her neighbours as once cut, it could not be kept for another day. The day's tiffin too had to be planned—grinding batter on the aattukal (mortar and pestle)—and then she broke the coconut to use in her cooking. She plucked flowers for the *poojai*, wove garlands and set out all the implements needed so that her husband could perform the rituals. She ground her curry pastes and chutneys on the *ammikallu* (the rectangle stone and pestle) and cut the vegetables on an *aruvamanai* (wooden plank with a sickle shaped knife attached to it).

She also made her own papads, vadams, pickles and sweets and snacks and planned to get these items ready within her daily schedule. Children, in-laws, visitors, festivals have all to be honoured and catered to. She had no time to sit down or do anything else. The only holiday she got was the three days off and that too, not if she was pregnant. Other women in the household—a widowed aunt or elder, a young girl child, did the cooking on those three days. Sometimes the men took over the cooking with only rice and rasam or *vethalkuzhambu* on the menu. This was the village life of a South Indian Brahmin woman and her family a couple of hundred years ago.

Then her husband, a scholar, priest and teacher, unable to earn an income in the *agraharam* (the Brahmin streets), decided to move out into the smaller towns. That was the beginning of an exodus that took this peripatetic people all over the world. From village to town, to cities and far off states in the country, they moved home and hearth in search of a living. Finally, the traditional barrier to overseas travel too was broken and a marginalized people used their brains, learning, wit and wisdom to seek new pastures overseas as well.

Throughout all these movements, the Brahmins managed to retain their habits, culture and customs keeping alive the *sampradayams* and *shastrams* inspired by the Vedas. Hailing from different parts of India, they retained Sanskrit and adopted the local languages and customs of their place of settlement. The range and intensity of the Brahmins' contributions to learning and culture in India is at odds with their numbers that form a miniscule percentage of Indian society. Brahmins have contributed immensely to the making of modern India in many fields like literature, science and technology, politics, culture, scholarship, religion etc.

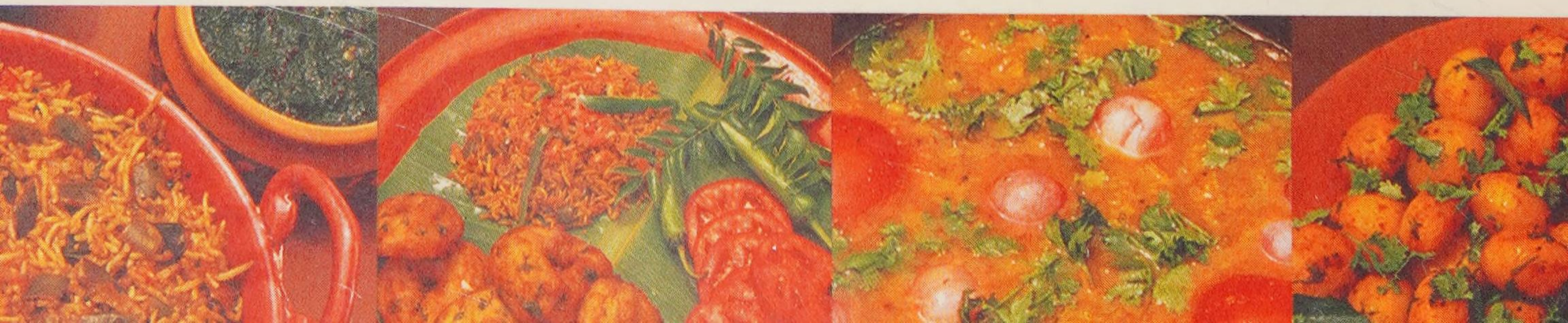
Today however, many Brahmins have set aside their cultural traditions and customs. Their habits are fast changing due to the many influences of environment and lifestyles. At the back of the mind of the modernised Brahmin is the tugging need to reclaim the roots, customs and habits especially of the cuisine. The food cooked in a Brahmin kitchen was *satvic* paying special attention to the balance and nutritional value of the meal eaten. The ragi porridge, the ladle of plain cooked dhal served before the rice and the topping of the spoonful of homemade ghee; the balance of plain and spicy food; and the cooling effects of yoghurt as a final course to set right any imbalance in the food eaten that day were meticulously maintained. Onion and garlic were not even thought of and *garam masalas* were unknown.

The exodus first to Mumbai and Pune and then to the north and east of India gradually introduced new ingredients and flavours. The dispersion around the world made the average South Indian family eat anything. The basic recipes however, have been maintained with only variations introduced in flavours and ingredients. Yet, when there is a special celebration or festival, the traditional meal is cooked and eaten.

This book on vegetarian cooking retains the authentic methodology of the South Indian Brahmin's cuisine. However, it has incorporated modern techniques, implements and local ingredients. It records the adaptability and assimilation of the tastes of a people who have left behind the *agraharams* (Brahmin streets in a village or town) of their ancestors but who still retain the values and traditions of their roots.

Enjoy the Samayal and Saapadu of a modern South Indian Brahmin cuisine!

Padmini Natarajan



IMPORTANT TIPS

IMPORTANT TIPS FOR COOKS

Always extract the puree of **TAMARIND** by soaking it in a cup of hot water. Place dry tamarind bits in a bowl with half a cup of water and zap in the microwave. You can refrigerate the pulp for a few days. Do not dilute until required. When using readymade tamarind paste, take

- 1½ teaspoons of the paste, equivalent of a lemon-sized ball of tamarind
- 1 tablespoon of paste as a substitute for a marble-sized ball of tamarind.

Dissolve it in a cup of water before adding to the recipe. If the paste / pulp is dark in colour, use a pinch of turmeric powder to lighten the colour. Watch out for the fibers and bits and pieces and strain them off.

Many brands of **ASAFOETIDA** powders are available in the market. To get an authentic flavour use the block of gelled asafoetida. This chunk can be torn into bits when it is soft. Prepare tiny balls and leave them in the open to dry. Soak one ball at a time in ¼ cup of water. This dissolved asafoetida paste is useable many days. Refrigerate and use each day. If the block becomes dry and hard, cut it with a nutcracker or knock into bits with a hammer. Do be careful of your fingers!

MUSTARD seeds are used in Indian cuisine for season/seasoning. Heat a teaspoon of oil or ghee in a saucepan and add the mustards. Take care to close the lid of the pan as the seeds tend to leap out while popping and can cause mild burns. Always add the rest of the ingredients listed for the seasoning as soon as the mustard starts to pop. Mustard can be tiny, but its burn can be mighty uncomfortable! In South Indian cooking husked split white urad dhal is used for all seasoning and chutneys. In case the whole white urad dhal is available it can be used for dishes like vadais, idlis and dosais. Again, the split yellow moong dhal is used for cooking.

SALT has been used for a mild flavour in all the recipes. Use a little more for the powders or podis. For other dishes, be judicious in its usage. Experiment in the initial stages until you know the quantity you need for your taste. Less is easier to repair and healthy as well!

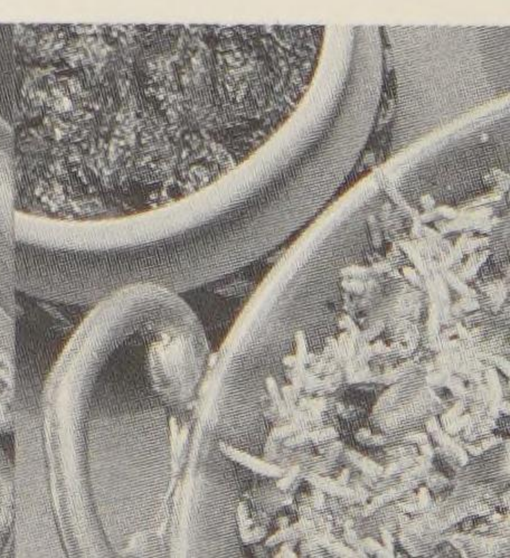
SPICE or chillies can be increased if your family prefers to use it generously. The book has a mild flavouring as many may be uncomfortable with spicy food. You may remove the seeds from fresh green Indian chillies if it is the very spicy variety. It is recommended to use it judiciously in the beginning before turning adventurous.

A **PRESSURE-PAN/ PRESSURE COOKER** saves time, retains colour, and flavour of the various ingredients. Vegetables, ***sambhars, kuzhambus*** and ***kootus*** can be directly prepared in the pressure-pan and in a deep skillet or saucepan.

1. For **GREEN VEGETABLES**, heat a cup of water with salt in a pressure-pan. When the water starts to boil, add the vegetables and toss them lightly with a ladle. You will observe that it turns a rich green in colour. Close the lid and steam up to one whistle. Turn off the heat and place the pan under cold running water. Once all the steam has been released, remove the stopper and open the lid. The vegetables look green and tender and are ready to be used as specified in the recipe. Use as little water as possible, just enough to cook the vegetables especially for vegetables like spinach, cabbage or ash gourd.

2. For **SAMBARS AND KUZHAMBUS** add the required spices with the popped mustard, curry leaves, tamarind, water and salt along with the vegetables. Follow the same procedure as detailed in the vegetables. Avoid placing the pan under cold running water and allow it to cool naturally. Wait for the hissing sound to stop before opening the lid.

3. When cooking **GRAMS/DHALS**, boil some water in an open pan with a dash of lemon juice (to prevent the base of the pan from darkening). Place the dhal/ pulses and enough water to cover it with ¼ tspn. of turmeric in a smaller stainless steel dish. Cover it with a lid and close the pressure cooker and steam.



For best results red gram (thur dhal) must be washed well and soaked in hot water for 10 minutes before being steam-cooked in the pressure cooker. Within a few minutes the gram will double in size. If you need a soft and pasty consistency, cook for 3-4 whistles on a high flame. Turn off the heat and allow the pan to cool until the hissing sound stops. The lid can be opened after removing the weight. Use the cooked gram as specified in the recipe.

A **RICE COOKER** comes with an inner dish. Add 1½ to 2 cups of water in it and use some lemon juice to prevent the darkening of the inner dish. Keep the rice in another metallic dish and place it in the rice-cooker surrounded by water. The steamed rice is fluffy and grainy if placed in a separate dish instead of being cooked directly in the rice-cooker dish.

A **MICROWAVE** is not just for heating food. It can cut preparation time drastically and also help you drive away the sweaty tediousness of cooking. Use the gadget freely to steam and cook different ingredients and dishes. Special steamers and idli moulds are now available to be used in the microwave. To prepare arubi/colacassia (taro root) roast or potato roast in the microwave, first pierce the vegetable with a fork, wrap it in a casement cloth and cook for 3 to 4 minutes. Peel the skin, cut into pieces, add the required spices and oil and roast it in the microwave without covering the dish. Hey presto! The chore is done in a jiffy.

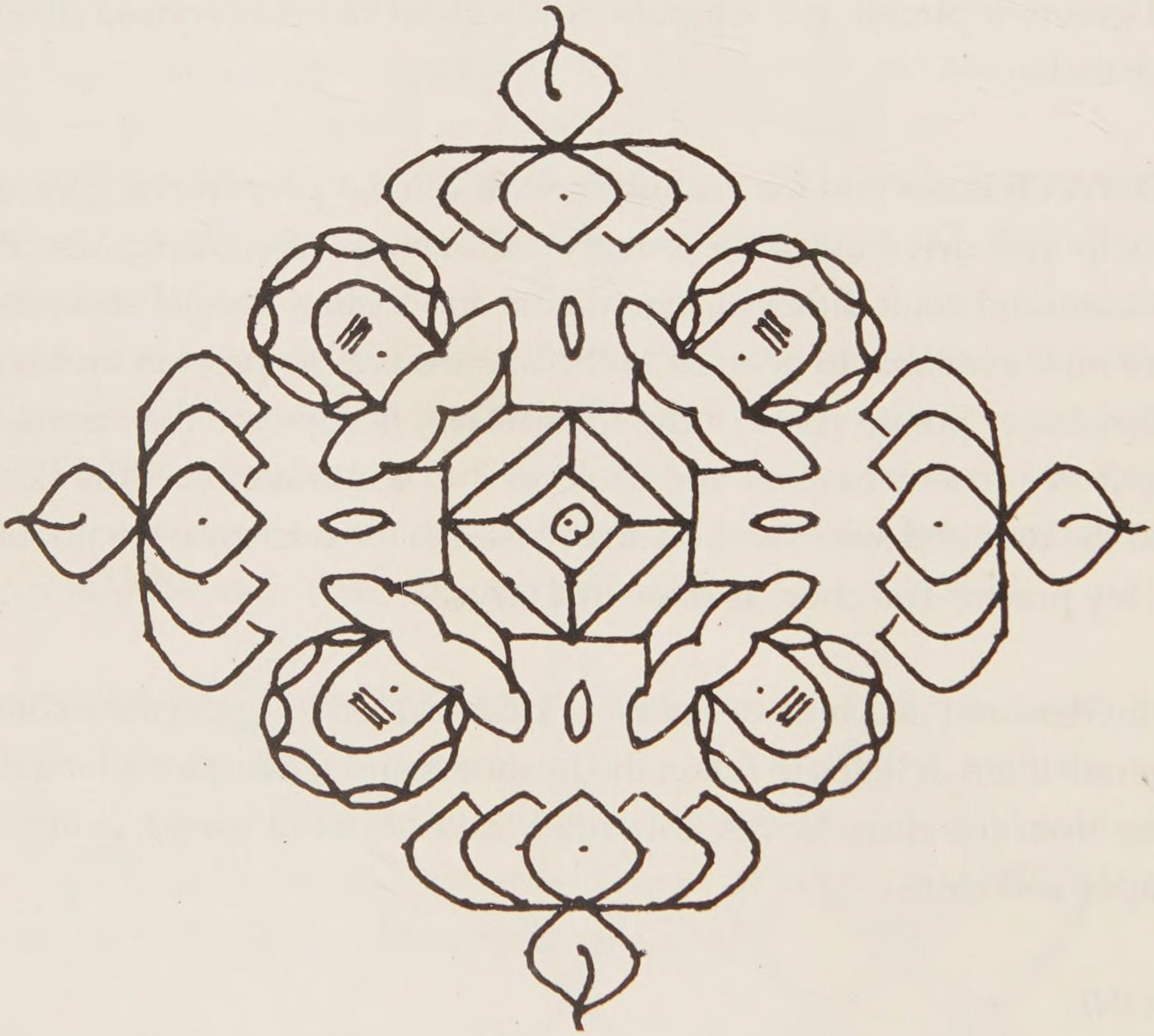
STORE powders and all kinds of flours in a zip-lock or a Tupperware container and refrigerate them. It helps to retain the freshness and flavour for a long time. Wipe the wetness from the curry leaves, coriander leaves or mint leaves, gently wrap in a kitchen paper and store

CHEF ALONE

Students or professionals living alone find cooking a challenge. With these easy to prepare recipes you may start to enjoy the process thoroughly. The ready-made microwave foods available in the Indian grocery or the catered food cannot replace a wholesome, home-made meal.

Ensure that cooked *tuvar dhal* and prepared tamarind puree is always stored in the refrigerator. Prepare dosai batter (Pg-80), idli batter (Pg-78), adai batter (Pg-84) and refrigerate. Follow the reference guide given next at all times.

The quantity for each recipe in the book serves 4 to 5 portions. Once you grow in confidence a wonderful world of '*sattvic*' South Indian food will open for you. Check out the ingredients and their equivalents on the back of the book.



A Ready Reckoner for Vegetarian Samayal

This is a quick reference guide to planning a meal with the vegetables at your disposal You will soon make different combinations as you experiment and cook the recipes in this book.

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(substitute **green squash, yellow squash** or **bottlegourd**)
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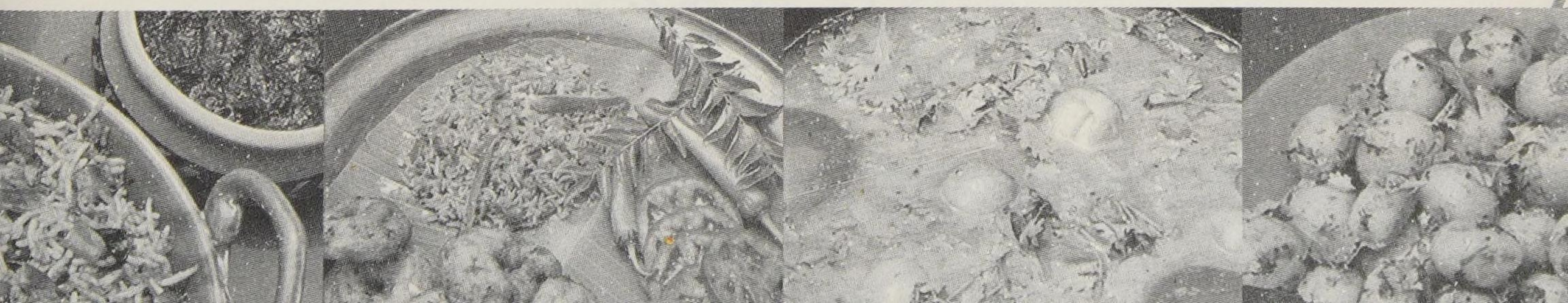

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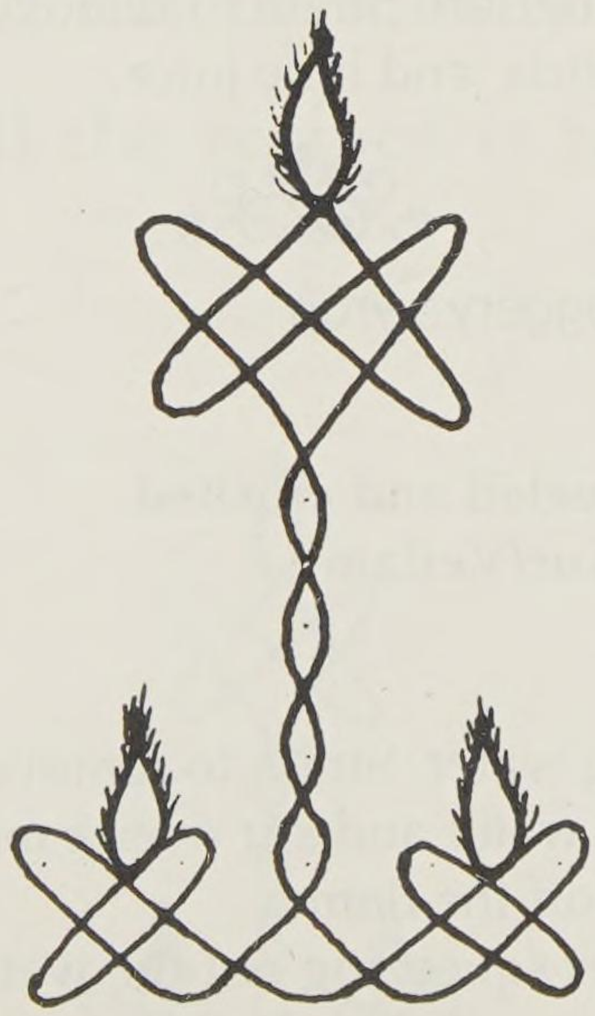


Health drinks From *Mami's* Kitchen

(Serves 2 people)

Paanagam brown sugar and dry ginger drink

Served in temples and homes during Ram Navami celebrations and on festival says as a thirst quencher

½ cup	Jaggery/Gur/Vellam
1 teaspoon	Dry ginger powder
2 cups	Water
2	Cardamom/Elaichi, crushed

1. Heat the water and melt the jaggery and strain to remove scum
2. Add dry ginger powder, crushed cardamom and cool.

Serve in the summer as a coolant.

Neer Mor spiced buttermilk

½ cup	Yoghurt
1½ cups	Cold water
A few	Curry leaves
½ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ teaspoon	limejuice (optional)
½ teaspoon	Salt (sea salt whole)

1. Beat the yoghurt and mix with water.
2. Keep a little water aside and crush the curry leaves with salt in a small mortar and pestle or on the chopping board with a rolling pin.
3. Add it to the watery yoghurt. Strain to remove pieces of the curry leaves.
4. Finally add the asafoetida and lime juice.

Inji Sorasam ginger-jaggery syrup

A digestive drink

1 6" piece	Ginger, peeled and crushed
¾ cup	Jaggery/Gur/Vellam
2 cups	Water

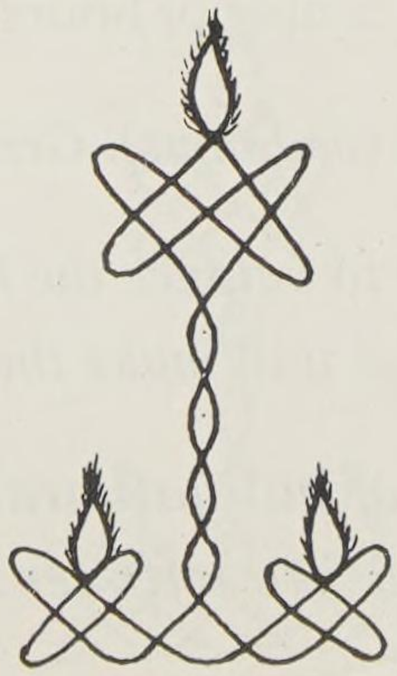
1. Melt jaggery in boiling water. Strain to remove scum.
2. Add ginger to jaggery water and stir over a medium fire for 10-15 minutes.
3. When it thickens take off the flame.
4. Strain the ginger pieces squeezing out the water thoroughly.

Serve the drink warm.

Glorious Rice

Rice is the staple food of South India because of the geographical features and climate. *Annam,* as it is called is representative of wealth and prosperity. Rice can also feed many mouths. Therefore, the cuisine is greatly based on rice and its derivatives. Basmati has been introduced in the past few decades. Other local varieties like Ponni, Nellore, Sona, Masoor – both polished and unpolished—are used. Old rice cooks well and gives better results and quantity.

Rice can be cooked in many ways--directly in a pan of water and finally draining off the water, in a pressure-cooker/pan, a rice-cooker or in a microwave. The ideal consistency of steamed rice, down South, is a light and fluffy grain like the petals of a jasmine flower. It should not be mushy or too dry. The water measurement given in all the recipes is for old rice.



Puliyodharai Saadham tamarind rice

It is usually offered to the Gods and distributed to devotees in temples as prasadam or blessed food

2 cups	Rice
½ cup	Thick tamarind pulp
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
½ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
½ cup,	Roasted peanuts, skinned (optional)
½ cup	Sesame oil
2 teaspoons	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram /White urad dhal
½ teaspoon	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
4	Red chillies halved
A few	Curry leaves torn into half

1 Cook the rice in 5 cups of water. Each grain of the cooked rice should be separate. Set aside to cool.
2 Heat a tablespoon of oil, add the mustard to pop. Add the dhals, stir for 10 seconds until it turns golden. Add the chillies and fry till it becomes red. Put in the curry leaves.
3 Add the peanuts and sauté for 20 seconds.
4 Add tamarind pulp, a cup of water, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and salt. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for 5-7 minutes. Open the lid and cook until it becomes a thick sauce.
5 Add the remaining oil and take it off the stove.
6 Mix the sauce and rice well without mashing it.
7 Keep the *puliyodharai rice* for a couple of hours before serving.

Serve with fried papads or rice wafers (vadaams). Great for picnics and travelling.

Tasty tip: Add ½ teaspoon of jaggery to balance the hot and tangy flavour of the tamarind rice. A dash of fresh lime juice will make the dish more exotic.

Timely tip: Prepare extra portions of puliyotharai paste and refrigerate. Can be used as a pickle for curd rice or added to leftover rice and served fresh!

Thengai Saadham coconut rice

2 cups	Rice
1 cup	Grated coconut
2 tablespoons	Cashewnuts halved
½ teaspoon	Ginger paste
1 teaspoon	Clarified butter/Ghee (page-117)
1 teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds
½ teaspoon	Black gram /White urad dhal
2	Red chillies halved
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
a few	Curry leaves
1 teaspoon	Coconut oil

1. Cook the rice in 5 cups of water until each grain is fluffy. Set aside to cool.
2. Fry the cashews in ghee until golden and set aside.
3. Heat the oil and pop the mustard; put in the curry leaves and asafoetida powder. Add the dhals and the chillies and fry until golden.
4. Put in the grated coconut and ginger paste and sauté until the coconut becomes slightly brown. Add the salt and take off the stove.
5. Add the roasted cashews and gently mix with the rice.

Serve as a snack with rice wafers (vadaams) or chips.

Tasty Tip: Spread the rice in a wide, shallow plate or dish to help mix the dish easily.

Health note: Add sautéed vegetables like peas, beans, carrots and cauliflower.

Yelumiccha Pazha Saadham lemon rice

2 cups	**Rice**
2 tablespoons	**Lime juice**
1 teaspoon	**Salt**

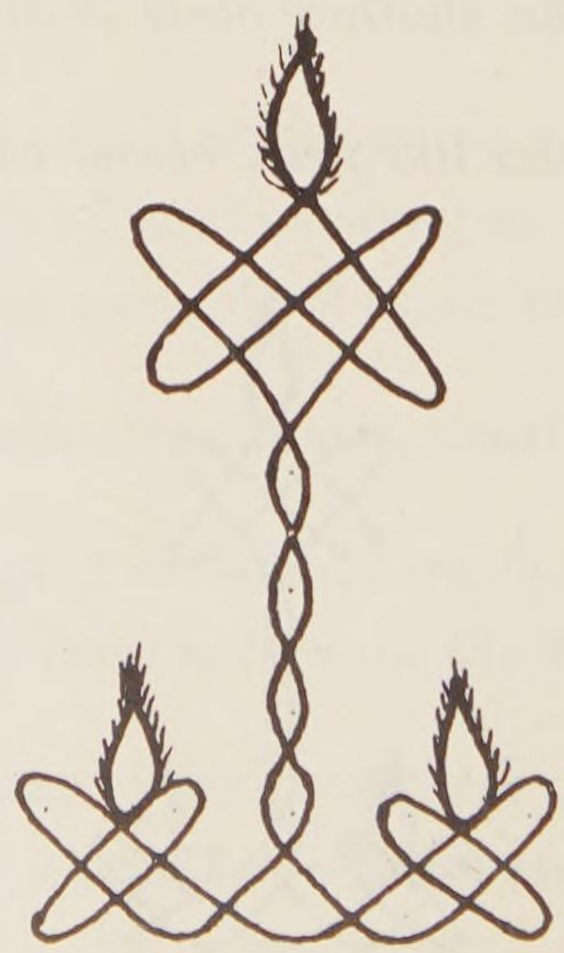
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/Urad dhal husked, split**
½ teaspoon	**Bengal gram/Chana dhal**
3	**Finely chopped green chillies**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
a few	**Curry leaves**
a pinch	**Turmeric/Haldi powder**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Cook rice in 5 cups of water until each grain is fluffy. Cool it.
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Put in the curry leaves, turmeric powder and asafoetida powder.
3. Add the dhals, stir for 10 seconds until it turns golden.
4. Take off from the stove and add the lime juice and salt.
5. Stir in the rice thoroughly.

Serve with crisps, papads and rice wafers (vadaams).

Tasty Tip: Sesame oil gives the rice dishes an enhanced flavour.



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Thakkaali Saadham-pg 6

Thengai Saadham pg 3

Bisi Bela Huli Anna-pg 7

Vaangi Bath-pg 9

Kudamilagai...
Saadham-pg 8

Milagu Jeeragam Saadham pepper and cumin rice

Famous in the temple city of Chidambaram

2 cups	**Rice**
2½ tablespoons	**Clarified butter/Ghee (page-117)**
¾ teaspoon	**Salt**

For seasoning:

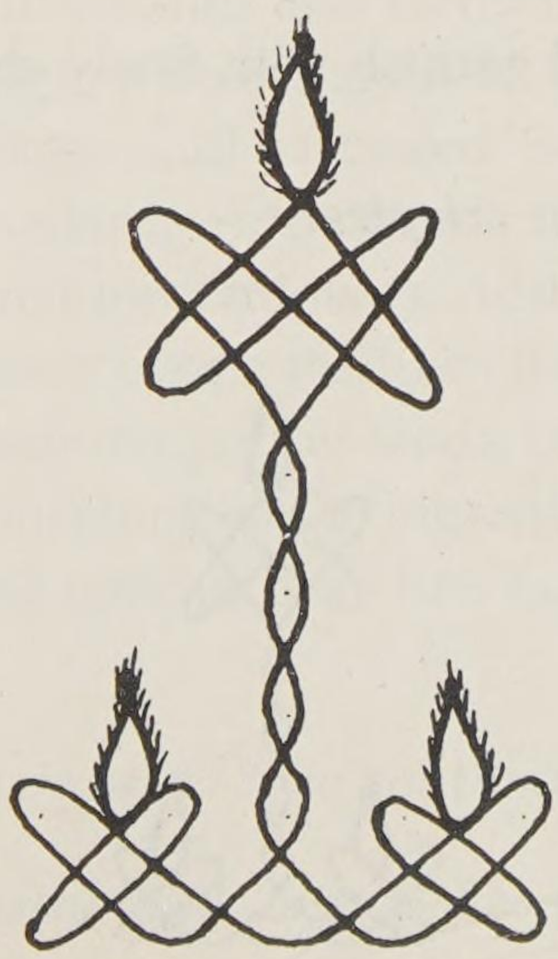
¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram /White urad dhal**
A few	**Curry leaves**

For the spice powder:

1½ tablespoons	**Peppercorn/Kali mirch**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
2 tablespoons	**Cumin seed/Jeera**

1. Cook the rice in 5 cups of water until each grain is fluffy. Set aside to cool.
2. Heat 1½ tablespoons ghee and roast the pepper, cumin seeds and asafoetida powder over a low flame. Blend into a coarse powder and mix gently into the rice.
3. Heat a tablespoon of ghee and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
4. Add the curry leaves and remove from fire.
   Stir in the rice gently along with the remaining ghee and salt.

Timely tip: Press into little katoris/small cups, unmould them and serve with a tangy kothsu.



Thakkaali Saadham tomato rice

2 cups	Rice
4	Tomatoes large, chopped fine
1	Onion, large, chopped fine
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric powder
¼ teaspoon	Cayenne pepper/Chilly powder
½ bunch	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram /White urad dhal
¼ teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
A few	Curry leaves
2	Green chillies, slit
3 tablespoon	Oil

1. Cook the rice in 5 cups of water until each grain is fluffy.
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the dhal and brown; then add the cumin seeds, asafoetida, curry leaves, green chillies and stir for 5 seconds.
3. Add onions, chopped tomatoes, turmeric powder, chilly powder and salt.
4. Stir, cover and cook over a medium heat.
5. Remove lid after a minute and stir again.
6. Sauté the paste for a couple more minutes until the oil separates from the sauce. Stir in the rice and mix lightly.
7. Put into a serving dish and garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve with banana chips, papads or crispies.

Bisi Bela Huli Anna hot dhal, tamarind and vegetable rice

1 cup	Rice
1 cup	Thuvar dhal
1¼ tablespoons	Tamarind puree
1 teaspoon	Poppy seeds/Khus khus
2	Radish large, chopped into halfmoons
2 large	Capsicums, chopped medium
2	Drumsticks, chopped 3 inch long
½ kilo	Small onions/Shallots, peeled
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder

For the spice powder

1 tablespoon	Coriander seeds/Dhania
1 tablespoon	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
2	Red chillies
small piece	Asafoetida gum (or ¼ teaspoon powder)
1 stick	Cinnamon
1 clove	Grated coconut or copra (dry coconut)

(Roast these for 15 seconds in a teaspoon of oil, and powder.)

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ cup	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)
2 tablespoons	Oil
½ bunch	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
1 teaspoon	Salt

1. Cook the rice with 3½ cups of water till it becomes mushy. Pressure cook the thuvar dhal in 3 cups of water until very soft.
2. Roast the poppy seeds for 10 seconds and blend into a powder.
3. Boil 2 cups of water and salt in a deep pan. Add the vegetables (except the onions) and cook over a medium flame until parboiled. Set aside.
5. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add onions, turmeric powder and stir. Add water, cover and simmer for 5 minutes. Add the tamarind pulp and parboiled vegetables. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for a couple of minutes.
9. Add the spice powder, powdered poppy seeds, cooked dhal and salt and stir.
10. Add the rice and mix well mashing in the ingredients mildly. Ensure that there are no lumps. Add the ghee and remove from fire. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve with a pachadi, roast potato or arbi / taro root/yam, fried papads or straw chips.

Tasty Tip: Sesame oil is traditionally used with dishes that contain tamarind.

Kudaimilagai Carrot Saadham carrot and capsicum rice

Fusion of modern vegetables and traditional rice dish

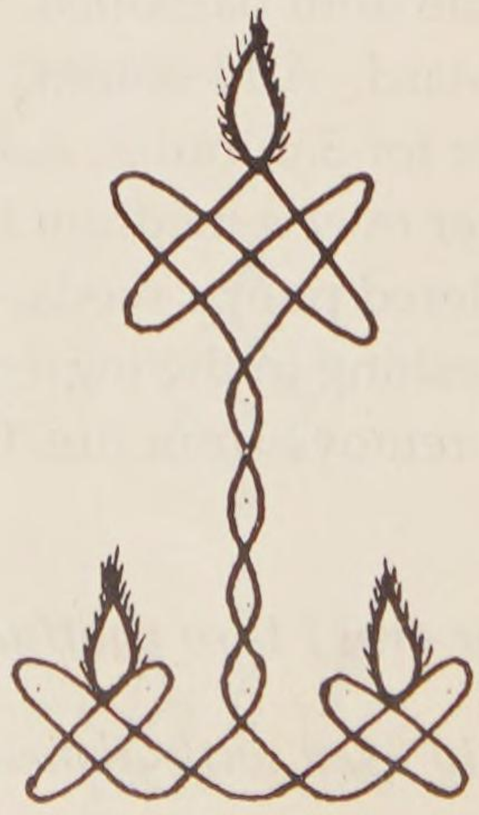
2 cups	Rice
2	Carrots, large grated
2	Capsicum/Green peppers large, chopped fine
1 tablespoon	Lime juice
½ bunch	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
1 teaspoons	Pitlai powder
½ teaspoon	Salt

For seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/ Rai
½ teaspoon	Cumin seeds /Jeera
A few	Curry leaves
a pinch	Turmeric /Haldi powder
3 tablespoons	Oil

1. Cook the rice in 5 cups of water until each grain is fluffy. Set aside to cool.
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the cumin seeds turmeric powder and curry leaves and stir for 5 seconds.
3. Add capsicum and carrots and sauté over a medium flame for two minutes. Keep the vegetable crunchy.
4. Add the pitlai powder, salt and the rice. Mix in the lime juice.
5. Remove from the flame and garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve hot with papads and pachadis.



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Thayir Saadham-pg 13

Maangai Saadham-pg 10

Araithu...
Kuzhambu-pg 16

Venn Pongal-pg 12

Murungakkai...
Sambhar-pg 18

Vaangi Baath eggplant rice

Introduced by the Marathas in Tanjore

2 cups	Rice
1 tablespoon	Tamarind puree
5	Eggplant/Aubergine (medium), cubed
2	Onions (medium), chopped fine
3	Tomato (large), chopped fine
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
1½ tablespoons	Pitlai powder (pg-120)
½ bunch	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
1 teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds
1 teaspoon	Black gram /White urad dhal
a few	Curry leaves
1	Green chilly, slit
1 tablespoon	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)
4 tablespoons	Oil

1. Cook the rice in 5 cups of water until each grain is fluffy. Set aside to cool.
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Brown the dhal and add the curry leaves and green chilly and stir for 3 seconds.
3. Put in the chopped vegetables and turmeric powder.
4. Stir well, cover and simmer over a medium flame for 5 minutes.
5. Open the lid, stir and cook till the eggplant (brinjal) is soft and done.
6. Add tamarind pulp, pitlai powder and salt and cook for a couple more minutes until the sauce thickens.
7. Stir in the rice and ghee. Remove from the flame.
8. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve hot with papads and pachadis.

Timely tip: Medium or small-sized eggplant is available in the Indian grocery stores.

Maangai Saadham raw mango rice

2 cups	Rice
2 large	Raw mango
1 tablespoon	Roasted and skinned peanuts
2 tablespoons	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)
1 teaspoon	Salt

Blend coarsely:

½ cup	Raw skinned, grated mango,
1 tablespoon	Roasted peanuts
¼ cup	Grated coconut
3	Red chillies
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
1 teaspoon	Black gram /White urad dhal
½ teaspoon	Cumin seeds / Jeera
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
A few	Curry leaves
2 tablespoons	Oil

1. Cook the rice in 5 cups water until each grain is fluffy. Set aside to cool.
2. Peel skin of mango and grate. Keep aside.
3. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the urad dhal and stir until golden; now add the cumin seed, hing and the curry leaves. Stir for 5 seconds.
4. Put in the remaining peanuts and the blended paste. Sauté for a few minutes over medium heat or until the liquid evaporates.
5. Add the rest of the grated mango, ghee and salt and stir for 30 seconds.
6. Stir in the rice and serve hot.

Serve hot with papads and chips.

Timely tip: This is a fresher version of the tamarind rice.

Kothamalli Saadham fresh coriander leaf rice

2 cups	Rice
2	Onions medium, chopped fine
2 tablespoons	Clarified butter/ghee (pg-117)
1 teaspoon	Salt

To blend into a fine paste:

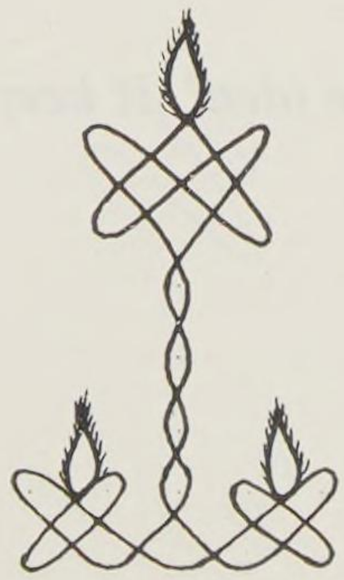
4 bunches	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
1	Green chilly
2	Red chillies
2	Peppercorns/Kali mirch

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram /White urad dhal
½ teaspoon	Cumin Seeds/Jeera
1	Green chilly, slit
2 tablespoons	Oil

1. Cook the rice in 5 cups of water until the grains are fluffy. Set aside to cool.
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Brown the urad dhal and add the cumin and green chilly.
3. Add onions and fry over a medium flame for 3 minutes until they turn translucent in colour.
4. Add the paste and salt and stir for a couple of minutes.
5. Add the ghee, remove from fire and stir in the rice gently.

Serve with a tamarind or tomato based gravy dish.



Venn Pongal soft rice and dhal mélange

1 cup	Rice
½ cup (husked)	Green gram /Moong dhal split
1 teaspoon	Peppercorn/Kali Mirch
½ teaspoon	Fresh ginger paste
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
2 tablespoons	Cashewnuts (halved)
4 tablespoons	Oil
2 tablespoons	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)
½ teaspoon	Salt

To blend into a coarse powder:

½ teaspoon	Peppercorn/Kali Mirch
2 teaspoons	Cumin seed/Jeera
a few	Curry leaf/Kari patha

1 Roast the moong dhal in a pan for a minute.
2 Mix with the rice, wash them well and cook in 4 cups of water till it becomes a mash. (Or pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles.)
3 In a frying pan, heat a tablespoon of oil and roast the peppercorns for tempering, for a few seconds.
4 Add a few curry leaves, ginger paste, asafoetida powder, the powdered spices, cooked dhal-rice and salt.
5 Stir well for 3-4 minutes.
6 If required, add a quarter cup of water so that pongal turns a soft and mushy.
7 In a small pan, heat ½ teaspoon ghee and roast the cashew until golden.
8 Add to the pongal. Remove from fire and add the rest of the oil and ghee.

Serve hot with sutta kathirikkai kotsu (pg-76) or with coconut chutney (p-67) and araithu... sambhar (pg-16).

Timely tip: Use a rice-cooker would be ideal. It keeps the pongal soft and hot even after 2 to 3 hours

Thayir Saadham seasoned yoghurt rice

1 cup	**Rice**
2 cups	**Yoghurt**
½ cup	**Milk**
2 tablespoons	**Pomegranate seeds**
2 tablespoons	**Cilantro/Coriander leaves (optional)**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

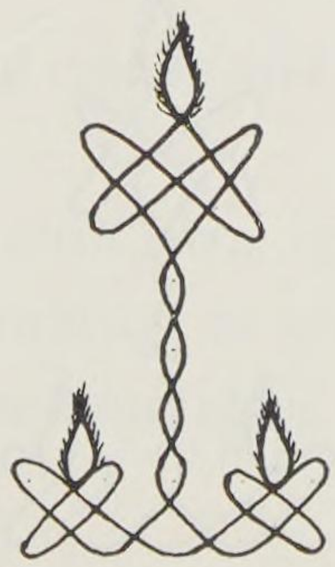
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
a pinch	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
1	**Green chilly, chopped fine**
1 inch piece	**Ginger, chopped fine**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Cook the rice with 3½ cups of water until it becomes mushy.
2. Using a ladle or masher, mash the cooked rice while it is still hot.
3. Stir in the milk gently. Ensure there are no lumps. Set aside to cool.
4. Heat the oil and pop the mustard; add asafoetida, green chilly and ginger stirring for 2 seconds. Take off the stove and add to the rice.
6. Add the yoghurt and salt and mix well.
7. Transfer into a serving dish and garnish with pomegranate seeds and freshly chopped coriander leaves.

Timely tip: This delicious dish is the last course of a meal in a Tamil household. Enjoy with a pickle of your choice. This dish is ideal for long distance trips and picnics.

Tasty tip: Ensure that the dish is not strongly salty and use fresh yoghurt. The milk cuts the sourness. You can garnish with green grapes, grated carrots and cucumber.



A Ladle of Gravy

The story of sambhar is interesting. The *Marathas* were ruling *Tanjore. Sambhoji* was a great cook and very fond of his *amti* with a handful of the tart kokum thrown in. In a particular season, the kokum that was imported from the Maratha homeland, did not reach the bare larder of the king's kitchen. *Sambhoji* was cooking and the minions were shivering in their dhothis to tell him that his favourite dish could not be made that day.

A smart *Vidushak,* who had been elected sous chef for the day, decided to solve the problem. He whispered in the king's ears that the locals used very little tamarind pulp to gain a sourness to the curry and that *Sambhoji* should experiment with this variation. Voila, the dish with the thuvar dhal, vegetables, spices and the tamarind pulp was cooked and served by the king to his coterie. The court declared the dish an outstanding preparation (they had no choice with the king as Chef) and thus was born *sambhoji's amti* that in time became *sambhar.*

The first course of a *tamizh* meal is *sambhar,* the first liquid accompaniment to steamed rice.

Tangy Tamarind Touch

Vengaaya Sambhar shallot and dhal gravy

½ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
2 teaspoons	Thick tamarind pulp
½ kilo	Baby onions/Shallots, peeled
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1½ teaspoons	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
A few	Curry leaves
¼ bunch	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram /White urad dhal
¼ teaspoon	Fenugreek seeds/Methi
A few	Curry leaves
1 teaspoon	Oil/Ghee

1. Soak the thuvar dhal in hot water for 15 minutes and cook in 2 cups of water to a very soft consistency. (Or, pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles)
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Stir in the urad dhal and fry for 8 seconds until brown. Now add fenugreek seeds and brown.
3. Into this add the onions and stir for half a minute. Add sambhar powder and a cup of water. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for 10 minutes.
4. Add the tamarind pulp, asafoetida powder, salt and some curry leaves.
5. Simmer over a medium flame for a couple of minutes.
6. Add the cooked dhal. When it thickens slightly, remove from fire.
7. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves and remaining curry leaves.

Serve hot with steamed rice, kootus and curries and assorted tiffins.

Tasty Tip: This dish can be prepared with okra, eggplant, radish, brussel sprout, turnips, capsicum, carrot, potato, bitter gourd, cabbage or spinach. You can also prepare a kadamba (colourful) sambhar adding a few of the vegetables of lesser quantity. Each vegetable still retains its own flavour.

Araithuvitta Thakkaali Vengaaya Sambhar

sambhar the kerala way

This is the authentic way of making sambhar. The readymade powder version evolved later to make life convenient. If there is a special day, then this is the dish that should be served. The Palghat Brahmins only use this method to make sambhar.

¼ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
1½ teaspoons	Thick tamarind pulp
½ kilo	Baby onions/Shallots, peeled
2 large	Tomato medium, chopped
a few	Curry leaves
a pinch	Cumin /Jeera powder (optional)
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the paste:
Collect together in a bowl:-

1 tablespoon	Coriander seeds /Dhania
1 tablespoon	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
2	Red chillies
A small piece/	Asafoetida /Hing or ½ teaspoon powder
1 cup	Coconut grated
1 teaspoon	Oil

Roast all the dry ingredients over medium heat until they turn golden. Add the grated coconut and stir for 1 minute. Blend into a fine paste.

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon (split)	Black gram/White urad dhal
¼ teaspoon	Fenugreek seeds/Methi
4 to 8	Curry leaves torn into bits
1 teaspoon	Oil

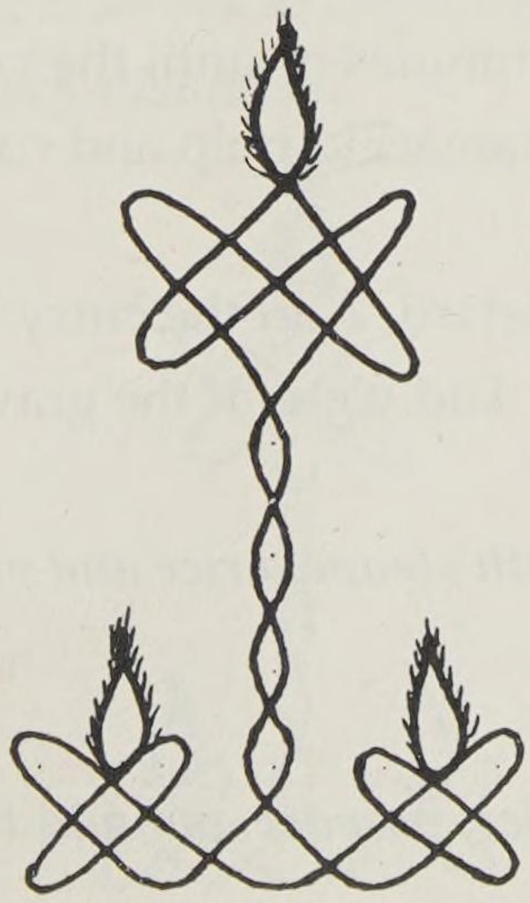
1. Cook the thuvar dhal in 2½ cups of water till it is mushy. (Pressure cook for 4 whistles.)
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Brown the urad dhal; now add the methi and curry leaves, stir for 3 to 4 seconds.

3. Add the onions and stir for a minute. Add half of the tomatoes, tamarind pulp, some curry leaves and salt along with 1½ cups of water. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for 3 minutes.
4. Add the blended paste, cumin powder, the rest of the tomatoes and curry leaves.
5. Cook for a couple of minutes over a medium flame or until it thickens to gravy consistency.

Serve hot with steamed rice or tiffins like dosai (pg-80), idli (pg-78) or venn pongal (pg-12).

Tasty Tip: *You can use drumsticks, white pumpkin, red pumpkin, fried okras, cayote squash, radish, spinach, green squash as an additional vegetable to the sambhar. Try combining a few!*

Timely tip: *Sambhar is an iconic association with South Indian food. Mix leftover sambhar and rice with a fresh round of seasoning and a garnish of fresh coriander leaves. Voila! Sambhar rice is ready.*



Murungakkai Menthiya Keerai Sambhar

drumstick-fenugreek leaf gravy

½ cup	Red gram/thuvar dhal
2	Drumsticks, chopped 2 inch long
2 bunches	Fenugreek leaves/Harri methi, chopped
1½ teaspoons	Thick tamarind pulp
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1½ teaspoons	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
1 teaspoon	Oil

1. Cook the thuvar dhal in 2 cups of water over a medium heat until mushy. (Or, pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles).
2. In a deep pan add a cup of water, chopped drumsticks, sambhar powder, salt and cook over a medium flame for 8-10 minutes. If the drumstick is overcooked it will disintegrate and the outer skin that is inedible can be irritating and cause trouble when swallowing.
3. Add the tamarind pulp and asafoetida powder and stir gently for a couple of minutes.
4. Add the fenugreek leaves, cooked dhal and boil over a medium flame for 3-4 minutes or until the gravy thickens.
5. Heat the oil and pop the mustard, brown the urad dhal and add to the gravy.

Serve hot with steamed rice and any of the kootus and karis from this collection.

***Timely tip:** Pressure cook the dhal and store in small portions in the freezer and use whenever necessary.*

***Healthy tip:** It is said that regular intake of drumsticks and okra or lady'sfinger is one of the reasons for the Tam-Brams numerical abilities!*

Vengaaya Vendhiya Kuzhambu

shallots in tamarind gravy

½ kilo	**Baby Onions/Shallots, peeled**
3 tablespoons	**Thick tamarind pulp**
½ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
1½ tablespoons	**Sambhar powder (Pg-119)**
A few	**Curry leaves**
2 tablespoons	**Sesame oil**
¾ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

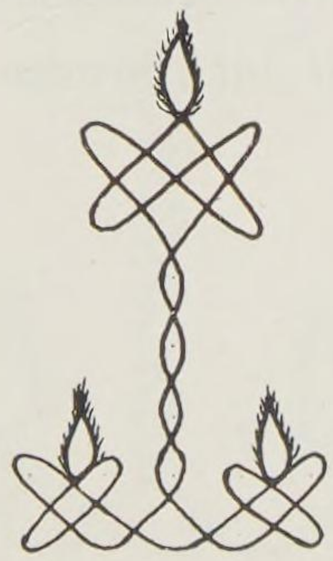
¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
¼ teaspoon	**Fenugreek seeds/Methi**
1 teaspoon	**Urad dhal and Bengal gram (Optional)**

1. Heat a teaspoon oil and pop the mustard.
2. Stir in the fenugreek and dhals and roast over a medium flame for 10 seconds until golden brown in colour.
3. Add the onions and stir for half a minute.
4. Stir in the tamarind pulp, asafoetida powder, sambhar powder, curry leaves and salt.
5. Cover and simmer for 8-10 minutes.
6. Remove the lid and thicken the *kuzhambu*. Add the remaining sesame oil. Switch off the flame.

Serve hot with steamed rice and papads. A great accompaniment for thayir saadham.

Timely tip: Use this recipe for all the vathal kuzhambus.

Save time by adding a teaspoon of rice flour/Bengal gram flour in 2 tablespoons of water to thicken the gravy. The kuzhambu can be stored in the refrigerator and used for a few days.



Appalam Vathal Kuzhambu papads in tamarind sauce

2 medium-sized	Papads/Appalam
3 tablespoons	Thick tamarind pulp
1½ teaspoons	Sambhar powder (Pg-119)
A few	Curry leaves
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Fenugreek seeds/Methi
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
4 tablespoons	Sesame oil

1. Tear the papads into tiny bits.
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the fenugreek and stir for 5-6 seconds until brown.
3. Add the pappad/pieces and stir until they puff up.
4. Add a cup of water, tamarind pulp, sambhar powder, salt and half the curry leaves.
5. Cover and simmer over a medium heat for 8-10 minutes.
6. When the gravy thickens, take it off the flame. Add the remaining curry leaves and the sesame oil.

Serve hot with steamed rice.

Timely tip: South Indian papads are available in Indian grocery stores in packets of 25 and 50.

Tasty Tip: Other interesting vegetables that can be used for vathal kuzhambu are okra, drumstick (saregova), shallots and egg-plant.

Karuveippilai Kuzhambu curry leaf gravy

This favourite nutritious kuzhambu stays fresh in the refrigerator for a few days.

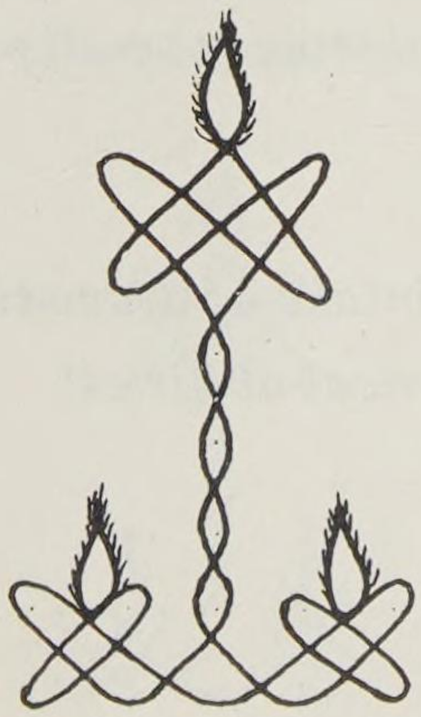
3 tablespoons	**Thick tamarind pulp**
¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Asafoetids/Hing powder**
1½ teaspoons	**Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

Collect in a bowl for the paste:

2 tablespoons	**Bengal gram/Chana dhal**
3 tablespoons	**Coriander seeds/Dhania**
4	**Peppercorns/Kali mirch**
4 cups	**Curry leaves washed and wiped**
½ teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Heat the oil and roast the ingredients for the paste (except the curry leaves) till the dhal turns golden.
2. Add the curry leaves and stir for 15 seconds.
3. Blend into a fine paste, using a little water.
4. Heat the ghee and pop the mustard. Add a cup of water, the blended paste, tamarind pulp, asafoetida and salt and simmer over a medium heat for 8-10 minutes, stirring now and then.
5. It is ready when it thickens to one-third of its original quantity.

Serve hot with steamed rice and papads.



Yeruvalli Kuzhambu

vegetables stewed in coconut and fenugreek gravy

1½ teaspoons	Thick tamarind pulp
1 medium	Potato peeled and chopped medium
2 small	Eggplant/Aubergine, chopped medium
4	Okra, 2 inch long pieces
1	Drumstick, 2 inch long pieces
1½ teaspoons	Oil
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the paste:

¼ teaspoon	Fenugreek/Methi
4	Red chillies
1 cup	Grated coconut

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
A few	Curry leaves torn coarsely

1. Heat the oil and roast the red chillies stirring gently until they turn bright red in colour. Remove the chillies.
2. Add the fenugreek seeds in the same oil and roast until it turns dark brown.
3. Blend along with the grated coconut into a fine paste, using a little water.
4. Boil 2 cups of water and salt in a deep pan. Add the vegetables and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
5. Cover and simmer for 8-10 minutes or until the vegetables are soft and done.
6. Add the blended paste and tamarind pulp and cook over a medium flame for 2-3 minutes.
7. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the curry leaves and season boiling gravy.
8. Stir for a couple of minutes. Add water if the gravy is too thick.

Serve this healthy kuzhambu hot, with steamed rice and papads. It is medicinal after a heavy meal at celebrations or festivals.

Tasty Tip: Fry a couple of red chillies, powder and add to the gravy to make it spicier.

Milagu Kuzhambu blended peppercorns in tamarind gravy

2 tablespoons	**Thick tamarind pulp**
¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
A few	**Curry leaves**
1 teaspoon	**Clarified butter/Ghee (Pg-117)**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

Collect in a bowl for the paste:

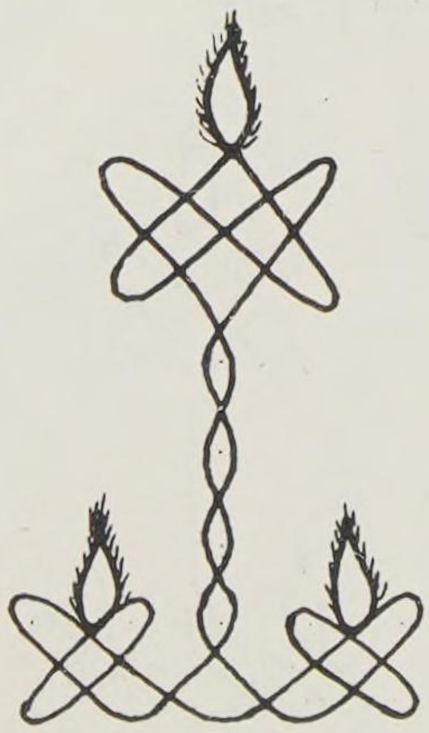
1½ teaspoons	**Peppercorn/Kali mirch**
1½ tablespoons	**Bengal gram/Chana dhal**
1½ tablespoons	**Cumin seeds/Jeera**
1 tablespoon	**Coriander seeds/Dhania**
½ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**

1. Heat the oil and roast the spices for the paste on a low flame for a minute.
2. Blend into a fine paste, using a little water.
3. Heat the ghee and pop the mustard. Add the curry leaves, tamarind pulp, paste and salt and stir well.
4. Add a cup of water, cover and simmer over a medium heat for 8-10 minutes, stirring now and then until it thickens to treacle consistency.

Serve hot with steamed rice and papads.

***Timely tip:** Some homes use drumsticks in this gravy for added flavour.*

***Tasty tip:** Traditionally, this gravy is served to lactating mothers for 40 days after childbirth. It is medicinal and balances stomach disorders.*



Kathirikkai
Rasavaangai-pg 25

Keerai Mulagootal-pg 33

Pudalangai Milagu kootu-pg 34

Paharkai Pitlai-pg 24

Appalam
Vathal Kuzhambu-pg 20

Yeruvalli
Kuzhambu-pg 22

Kathirikkai Rasavaangi dhal and eggplant gravy

Vangi is the Marathi name for brinjals or eggplants The taste is akin to sambhar with a stronger flavour of coriander seeds.

½ cup	**Red gram/Thuvar dhal**
½ kilo small	**Eggplant/Aubergine, chopped medium**
1½ teaspoons	**Thick tamarind pulp**
¼ teaspoon	**Turmeric/Haldi powder**
1½ tablespoons	**Pitlai powder (pg-120)**
A few	**Curry leaves torn into bits**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Cook the thuvar dhal in 2½ cups of water to a very soft consistency. (Pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles).
2. Boil a cup of water and salt in a deep pan. Add the eggplant and turmeric powder.
3. Cover and simmer for 8-10 minutes or until done. Ensure not to overcook the vegetable. Set aside.
4. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the vegetable, cooked dhal, tamarind pulp, pitlai powder, curry leaves, salt and simmer over a medium flame for 3-4 minutes or until the gravy thickens.

Serve hot with steamed rice.

***Tasty Tip:** Sauté the eggplant in a tablespoon of oil before adding to gravy.*
Soak a fistful of boiled kabuli chana/chickpeas for 6 to 8 hours, pressure cook for 4-5 whistles and add to the nutrition value of the dish.

Vazhaikkai Puli Kootu

raw banana cooked in tamarind gravy

1 large	Banana peeled, chopped-medium cubes
½ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
1½ tablespoons	Thick tamarind pulp
¾ teaspoon	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ cup	Grated coconut
A few	Curry leaves torn coarsely
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
2 teaspoons	Oil

1. Cook the thuvar dhal in 2½ cups of water to a soft consistency.
2. Boil a cup of water and salt in a deep pan.
3. Add the chopped vegetable, sambhar powder, turmeric powder and asafoetida powder.
4. Cover and simmer for 8-10 minutes over a medium heat or until done.
5. Add the tamarind pulp, salt and cooked dhal and continue to cook for 2-3 minutes.
6. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the urad dhal and brown , then roast the coconut for 25 seconds until light golden in colour.
7. Add the curry leaves and stir for 5 seconds. Add this to the boiling *kootu* and simmer for a couple of minutes.
8. Add a quarter cup of water if too thick and stir for 10 seconds.

Serve with hot rice.

Vendaikkai Puli Kootu okra gravy

½ kilo	Okra, chopped
½ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
1¼ tablespoons	Thick tamarind pulp
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
5	Green chillies, slit
½ teaspoon	Salt

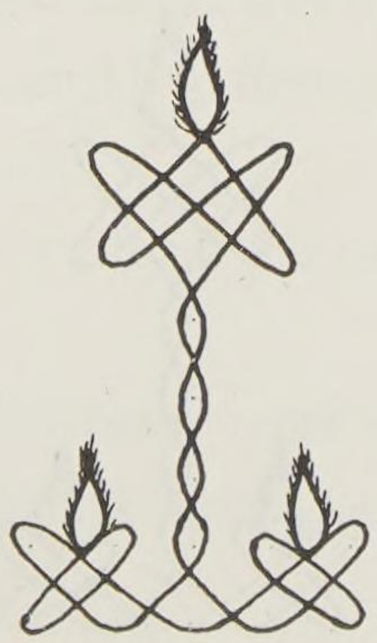
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/ White urad dhal
2 teaspoons	Oil

1. Cook the thuvar dhal in 2½ cups of water to a soft consistency and set aside. (Or pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles).
2. In a non-stick pan, heat the oil and pop the mustard and brown the udad dhal for 5 seconds.
3. Add the okra, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and green chillies.
4. Sauté on a low flame, sprinkle water and cover for a couple of minutes. Remove the lid and stir again.
5. Repeat the process until the vegetable is soft and cooked. Add the tamarind pulp and salt and stir for a couple of minutes.
6. Add the cooked dhal and simmer for 2-3 minutes or until it thickens slightly.

Serve hot with steamed rice.

***Tasty tip:** Try crisping the okra in a little more oil in a non-stick pan or in the microwave (2 minutes on high) and then add to the gravy*



Puli Keerai dhals and spinach in tamarind gravy

2 bunches	**Spinach, cut fine**
½ cup	**Red gram/Thuvar dhal**
1½ tablespoons	**Thick tamarind pulp**
3-4	**Green chillies, slit**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Bengal gram/Chana dhal**
½ teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Cook the thuvar dhal in 2½ cups of water until it turns mushy. (Or pressure cook for 3-4 whistles).
2. Boil 2 cups of water and salt in a deep pan. Add the chopped greens and toss with a ladle until rich in colour. Add the chillies and asafoetida powder.
3. Cover and simmer for 6-7 minutes over a medium flame or until the greens are done.
4. Strain the water and set aside. Blend or mash the spinach coarsely and set aside.
5. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the chana dhal and stir until it turns golden.
6. Add the spinach, tamarind pulp and the cooked dhal.
7. Cook for 3-4 minutes over a medium flame or until the gravy thickens slightly.
8. If too thick, add some of the strained water and stir for a couple of minutes.

Serve this healthy gravy with steamed rice and a kari of your choice.

Timely tip: The chillies may be too spicy, so use less or, scoop most of the seeds out and use.

Thiruvaadharai Kootu a vegetable mélange

1½ tablespoons	Tamarind pulp
10	Broad beans
½ piece	Ash gourd/Bottle gourd
¼ piece	Pumpkin
1 cup	Field beans, shelled
1 large	Raw banana
1 medium	Sweet Potato
2 medium	Carrots
1 large	Potato
4-6	Green chillies slit lengthwise
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 teaspoon	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
½ cup	Grated coconut
¾ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

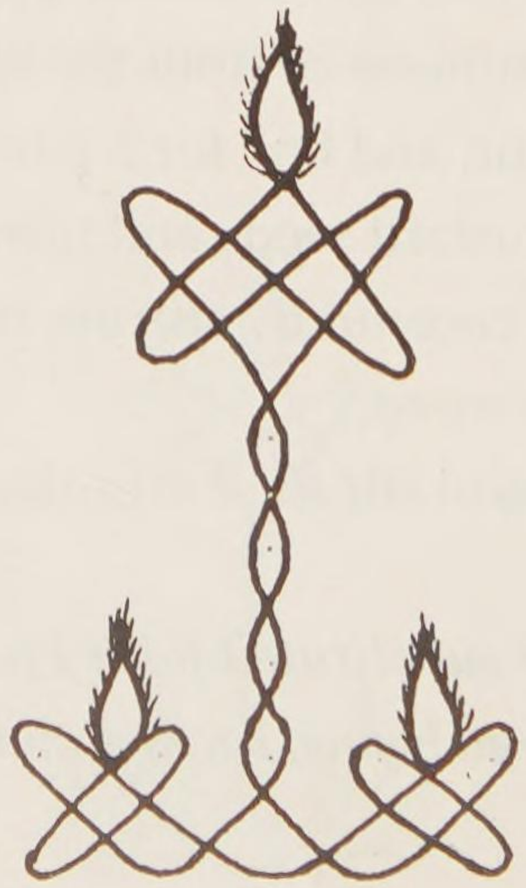
¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few	Curry leaves
2 tablespoons	Oil

1. Peel skins of ash gourd, pumpkin, sweet potato, potato, carrots and dice them into medium cubes.
2. Boil 2 cups of water adding salt in a deep pan.
3. Over a medium flame add vegetables and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
4. Toss in the turmeric, asafoetida and sambhar powder.
5. Close lid and cook for 6-7 minutes or until the vegetables are soft but firm.
6. Add the tamarind extract stir, and boil for 2 more minutes. Keep aside.
7. Heat the oil and pop the mustard seeds and brown the urad dhal.
8. Add and brown the grated coconut by stirring it for a few minutes. Add the curry leaves and stir for a minute more.
9. Finally add the vegetables and stir for 2 minutes until the gravy thickens.

Tasty Tip: The broad beans can be substituted with French/Haricot beans. The shelled field beans can be replaced with peas, Soya beans, soaked and cooked Kabuli/chick peas or brown gram.

Dal and Vegetable Stews

Tamil Brahmins specialise in vegetables cooked in their own juices or sometimes with the addition of dhals. They are delicious and serve as a side dish to a main course meal. The vegetables could be cooked in a gravy or made absolutely dry. The base of the sauce is mostly coconut and cumin seeds with red or green chillies. Coconut can easily be omitted and still retain the distinctive flavour.



Chenai Kootu yam gravy

½ kilo	Yam, chopped into medium cubes
½ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the paste:

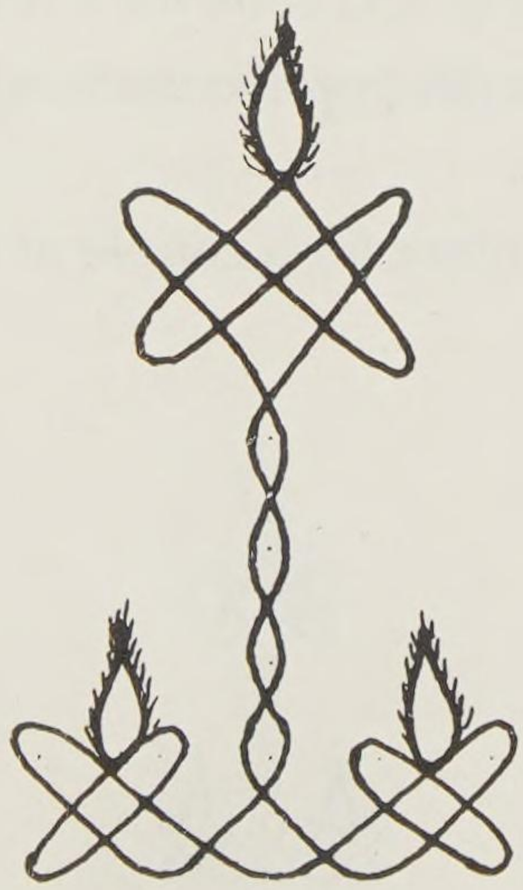
½ cup	Grated coconut
1 tablespoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
2	Red chillies

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
A few	Curry leaves
2 teaspoons	Oil

1. Cook the dhal in 2½ cups of water until mushy. (Or, pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles).
2. Stir the chillies in a teaspoon of oil until crisp and blend coarsely with the coconut and cumin seeds, using a little water.
3. Boil the yam in a deep pan with 2 cups of water and salt for 6-8 minutes over a medium flame or until cooked, but firm. Add the paste, stir gently and simmer for a couple of minutes.
4. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add it with the curry leaves to the yam gravy with the cooked dhal and stir over a medium flame for 3-4 minutes until it thickens a little.

Serve hot with rice.



Erisseri vegetables in coconut gravy

¼ kilo	Yam, medium pieces
1	Raw banana, medium pieces
½ piece	Pumpkin, medium pieces
2	Drumsticks, 2″ long pieces
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric powder
¼ cup	Grated coconut
A few	Curry leaves torn
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the paste:

½ cup	Grated Coconut
2	Red chillies
1 teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
1 tablespoon	Oil

1. Boil a cup of water and salt in a deep pan.
2. Add the vegetables and turmeric powder and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
3. Cover and simmer over a medium heat for 7-8 minutes or until the vegetables are done.
4. Blend coconut, chillies and cumin into a coarse paste.
5. Add the paste and curry leaves and cook for a couple of minutes.
6. In a small saucepan, heat the oil, pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
7. Add and brown the coconut.
8. Add to the *kuzhambu* and simmer for a couple of minutes.

Serve hot with steamed rice.

Keerai Mulagootal green spinach dhal in coconut gravy

1 large bunch	**Spinach chopped fine**
¼ cup	**Green gram/Yellow moong dal**

For the paste:

¼ cup grated	**Coconut**
1½ teaspoons	**Cumin seeds/Jeera**
1	**Red chilly**
1 tablespoon	**Rice flour**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Roast the chilly in ½ teaspoon oil for 5 seconds. Blend along with coconut cumin and rice flour and keep aside.
2. Cook the dhal in 1½ cups of water until mushy. (Or, pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles). Keep aside.
3. Heat 2 cups of water with salt. Add the spinach and stir for 2 minutes until a rich green in colour. Close lid for a minute and open again to stir until soft and cooked.
4. Heat ½ teaspoon oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
5. Combine the dhal, spinach and paste and stir over a medium flame for a couple of minutes until it thickens a little.

Serve this delicious dish with steamed rice and a kari.

Timely tip: Substitute half teaspoon of corn flour instead of rice powder.

Pudalangai Milagu Kootu snake gourd in pepper gravy

A little different kootu with the flavour of freshly ground pepper

1 whole	**Snake gourd, divide and chop fine**
½ cup	**Green gram/Yellow moong dhal**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
1 teaspoon	**Peppercorns/Kali mirch**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
A few	**Curry leaves torn into half**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Roast the peppercorns in a dry pan till its flavours are released. Powder and keep aside.
2. Cook the moong dal in 2 cups of water and set aside. (Or, pressure cook for 2 whistles).
3. Boil a cup of water and salt in a deep pan. Add the snake gourd and toss with a ladle until rich in colour. Add the asafoetida powder and cover and simmer over a medium heat for 7-8 minutes until the vegetables turns soft.
5. Add the cooked dhal and pepper powder. Stir well.
6. In a small pan, heat the oil and pop the mustard, and brown the urad dhal. Add the curry leaves to the boiling gravy. Simmer for 3-4 minutes or until it thickens slightly.

Serve hot with rice.

Timely tip: Discard the central portion of the snake gourd and the seeds if it is not tender.

Muttakos Pattani Kootu cabbage and peas gravy

¼ cup	Green gram/Yellow moong dhal
½ kilo/1 lb	Cabbage finely chopped
¼ cup	Shelled peas
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 teaspoon	Oil
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the paste:

¼ cup	Grated coconut
1	Red chilly
1 tablespoon	Cumin seed/Jeera

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few pieces	Curry leaves torn

1. Cook the moong dhal in 1½ cups of water until soft (Or, pressure cook for 2 whistles). Optional: (In a saucepan fry the red chilly in half teaspoon of oil until crisp.)
2. Blend the red chilly with the coconut and cumin seeds into a coarse paste, using a little water.
3. Boil a cup of water and salt in a deep pan. Add the vegetables and asafoetida powder and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
4. Cover and simmer for 5-7 minutes over a medium flame or until done.
5. Add the paste and cooked dhal, stir gently and let it boil.
6. In a small pan, heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal. Add the curry leaves to the simmering gravy.
7. Stir for a couple of minutes or until the gravy thickens slightly.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Tasty tip: *Add a dash of raw coconut oil to the kootu after you remove it from the stove. The flavour is exotic. You can also add coconut milk from a tetrapak or dry powder available in Indian and Thai grocery shelves.*

Chow Chow Kootu choko (green squash) cooked with dhal

¼ cup	Green gram/Yellow moong dhal
¼ kilo/1 lb/2 large piece	Chayote squash/chow chow peeled and cubed
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the paste:

¾ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
1	Red chilly
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ cup	Grated coconut
1 tablespoon	Cumin seed/Jeera

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few	Curry leaves, torn into two
1½ teaspoons	Oil

1. Heat a teaspoon of oil and roast the red chilly until red. Add and brown the urad dhal and put in the asafoetida. Add the coconut, cumin seed and blend into a coarse paste.
2. Cook the moong dhal in 1½ cups of water until soft. (Or, pressure cook for 2 whistles).
3. Boil a cup of water and salt in a deep pan.
4. Add the vegetables and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
5. Cover and simmer for 5-7 minutes over a medium flame or until soft.
6. Add the blended paste and cooked dhal, stir gently and let it boil.
7. In a small pan, heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal. Toss in the curry leaves and add to the simmering gravy.
8. Stir for a couple of minutes or until the gravy thickens slightly.

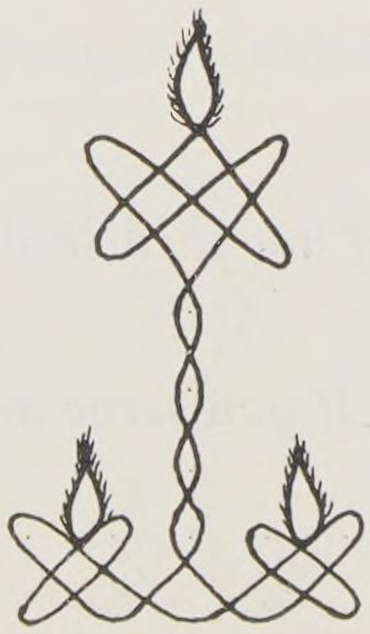
Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Ollan vegetable stew - Kerala style

¼ piece	Pumpkin/Kaddhu chopped medium
½ piece	Ash gourd, chopped medium
½ cup	Black-eyed dry beans/Karamani
1 teaspoon	Jaggery/molasses/Gur
2 tablespoons	Coconut milk
1 teaspoon	Coconut oil
½ teaspoon	Salt

1. Soak the black eyed beans (karamani) in a cup of hot water for 15 minutes and cook until soft. (Or, pressure cook for a whistle0. Set aside.
2. Boil 2 cups of water and salt in a deep pan and add the chopped pumpkin and ash gourd and simmer for 5-7 minutes or until done.
3. Add the cooked black-eyed beans and simmer for a minute.
4. Remove from fire and add jaggery, coconut milk and coconut oil.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.



Avial mixed vegetables in coconut gravy

½ piece	Ash gourd, peeled
3 small	Eggplants/Aubergine/Brinjal
2 medium	Carrots
½ large	Raw peeled banana
¼ piece	Yam/Taro root
2	Drumsticks
1 cup	Yoghurt beaten
¼ cup	Curry leaves
2 tablespoons	Coconut oil
1 teaspoon	Salt

For the paste:

2 tablespoons	Rice
5	Green chilly
1½ cups	Grated coconut
1 teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera (optional)

1. Soak the rice in a cup of hot water for 15 minutes.
2. Chop all the vegetables into 2 inch long pieces.
3. Drain the water and blend finely with the coconut, cumin seeds and chillies, using very little water. Keep aside.
4. Boil 2 cups of water and salt in a deep pan.
5. Add the vegetables and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
6. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for 5-7 minutes or until done.
7. Add the yoghurt and the paste and stir for a couple of minutes until it thickens slightly.
8. Add some more water if required.
9. Remove from the stove and add the curry leaves and coconut oil.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

***Tasty Tip:** You can add a seasoning of mustard seeds*

***Timely tip:** This is a very special dish. If you serve avial to guests that is hospitality!*

Aappam Stew vegetables stewed in coconut milk

10-12	French beans
1 large	Carrot
1 medium	Onion
¼ cup	Shelled peas
2 cups	Coconut milk
¼ teaspoon,	Peppercorn/Kali mirch powdered
¼ teaspoon	Salt

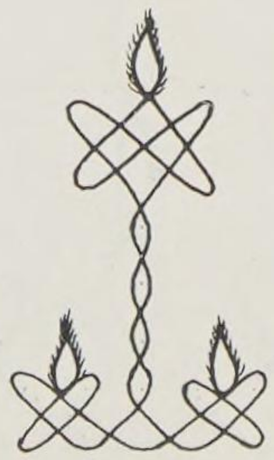
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
3	Green chillies, slit
2	Cardamoms/Elaichi
2	Cloves
1	Bay leaf
1 teaspoon	Coconut oil

1 Chop the vegetables into medium cubes.
2 Roast and blend the peppercorns.
3 Boil a cup of water and salt in a deep pan. Add the chopped vegetables and cover and simmer over a medium flame for 5-7 minutes or until soft. Keep aside.
4 In a pan, heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the chillies and half of the coconut milk and simmer over a medium flame for a couple of minutes.
6 Stir in the bay leaf, cardamoms and cloves for 12 seconds; add this and the remaining coconut milk to the vegetables and stir over a medium flame for a couple of minutes.
7 Add the pepper powder and remove from stove.

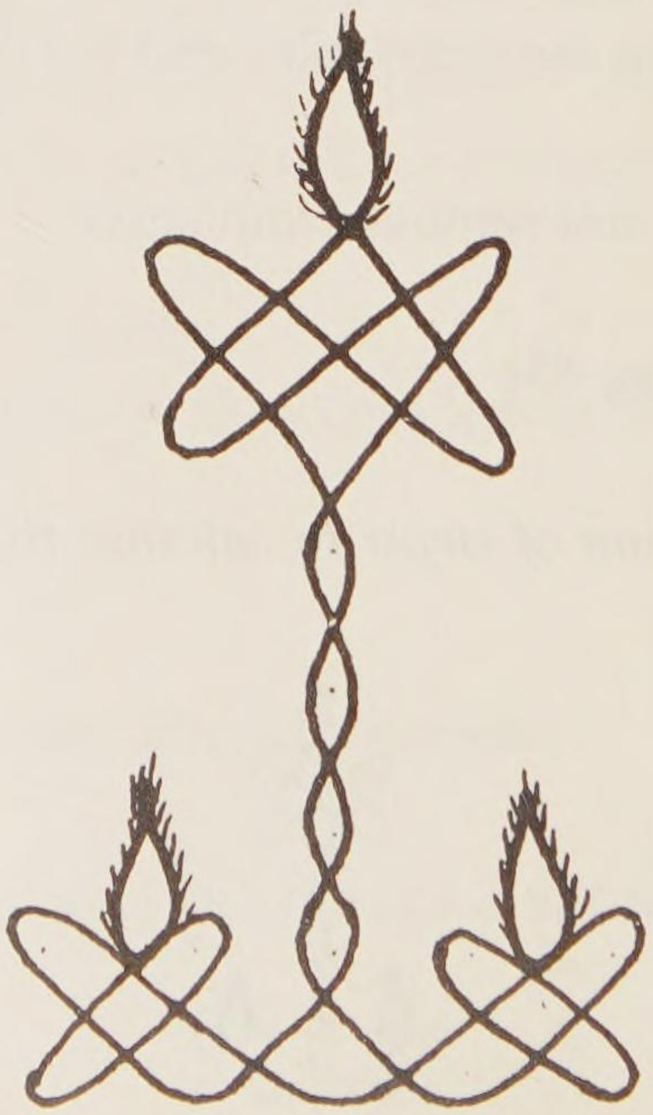
Serve as a side dish to aappam (pg-85)

Tasty Tip: Add a quarter teaspoon of sugar to enhance the flavour.



Kari–Vegetable Variations

The word curry comes from the word 'kari' that is Tamizh word for a preparation of dry vegetable with spices. The British in India added water and meat to the 'kari' and it came to be known as the Madras curry. Curry is basically vegetarian and began to be associated with non-vegetarian dishes.



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Kathirikkai Kari-pg 42

Muttakos Pattani...-pg 41

Chow chow kootu-pg 36

Vazhaithandu Kari-pg 43

Kadhamba Kari-pg 44

Vendaikkai Kari-pg 45

Keerai Masiyal-pg 46

Urulai Kizhangu
Roast-pg 50

Muttakos Pattani Carrot Kari vegetable mélange

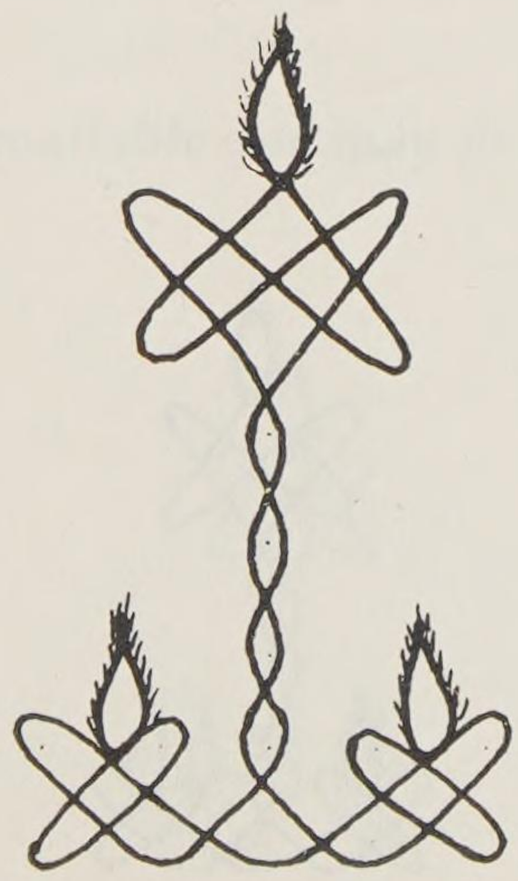
½ kilo	Cabbage, finely chopped
½ cup	Carrot, finely chopped
½ cup	Peas shelled
3 tablespoons	Grated coconut
1 teaspoon	Coriander leaves/Cilantro chopped fine
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
1 halved	Red chilly
A few	Curry leaves torn into two
½ teaspoon	Oil

1. Boil ¼ cup of water and salt in a deep pan. Add the vegetables and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
2. Cover and simmer over a medium heat for 5-7 minutes or until the water evaporates.
3. In a pan, heat the oil, pop the mustard and add the chilly, brown the urad dhal and add curry leaves.
4. Add the vegetables, mix well and remove from fire. Toss in the freshly grated coconut. Garnish with chopped, fresh coriander leaves.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.



Kathirikkai Kari stir-fried whole eggplant

16-18	**Eggplants/Aubergine small**
For filling	**Pitlai powder (pg-120)**
½ teaspoon	**Tamarind puree**
¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
4 tablespoons	**Oil**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

1. Slit each eggplant into four, without separating from stalk, so that it remains whole.
2. Mix salt in to the pitlai powder and stuff the eggplants.
3. You can carefully scoop out a wee bit of the insides to make small pockets.
4. Place the stuffed eggplant in a microwave dish.
5. Add a teaspoon of oil and cook for 2 minutes to allow the water to evaporate.
6. Remove and add the tamarind juice and microwave for one more minute.
7. Or, you can cook the stuffed eggplant straightaway in a heavy bottomed wok—it will take a little more time to cook.
8. In a deep non-stick pan, heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard seeds.
9. Place the eggplant one beside the other in the pan, cover and cook for 3 minutes over a gentle fire.
10. Open the lid, turn each eggplant gently using tongs. Cover and cook for a couple of minutes. When the vegetable is soft in the inside and crispy on the outside transfer to a serving bowl.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Tasty tip: You can add finely chopped or ground onion to the stuffing. Garnish with chopped cilantro.

Vazhaithandu Kari banana stem garnished with coconut

2 tablespoons	Green gram/Moong dhal split, husked
7-8" long	Banana stem
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
2 tablespoons	Grated coconut
¼ teaspoon	Salt

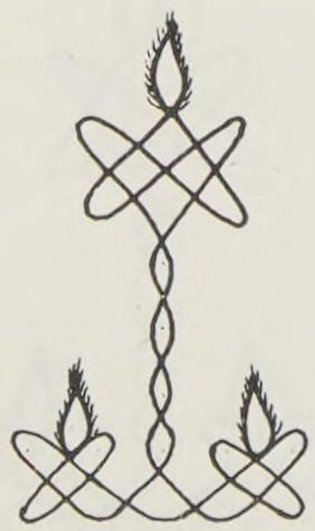
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
2	Green chillies, slit
A few	Curry leaves torn coarsely
1 teaspoon	Oil

1. Parboil the moong dhal in 2 cups of water for 7-10 minutes until half done. Keep aside.
2. Peel the outer skin of the banana stem to about ½ inch and chop into thin round slices and then make 1"thin slices. Remove the inner fibre by rolling it in your forefinger and then discard. Soak in thin buttermilk to avoid discolouration.
3. Heat the oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal. Heat a cup of water adding salt, turmeric powder, and asafoetida powder. Wash the vegetable in water, add the spices and cook for 5-7 minutes or until tender to taste.
4. Add the curry leaves, half boiled moong dhal and stir for 20 seconds.
5. Garnish with coconut. Mix well and remove from flame.

Serve this traditional dish with a main course gravy and rice.

Tasty tip: If banana stem is not available you may prepare this dish with either raw bananas or snake gourd.



Kadhamba Kari mixed vegetables

¼ kilo	French beans, chopped fine
¼ cup	Peas, shelled
2 large	Carrots, small cubes
1 cup	Cauliflower, small florets
3 tablespoons	Coconut, grated
1 teaspoon	Cilantro/Coriander leaves chopped fine
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
1 teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
1 halved	Red chilly
½ teaspoon	Oil

1. Boil ½ cup of water and salt in a deep pan.
2. Add the vegetable and toss with a ladle until it turns a rich green.
3. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for 5-6 minutes until the water is absorbed and the vegetables are done.
4. In a pan, heat the oil and pop the mustard, add the chilly, stir until deep red and brown the urad dhal.
5. Add the vegetables, mix well and remove from fire.
6. Toss in the freshly grated coconut and garnish with chopped, fresh coriander leaves.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Tasty tip: You can cook any vegetable, individually or in various combinations with this recipe.

Vendaikkai Kari stir-fried okra

½ kilo	Okra, cut into 2 or small rounds
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Chilly powder/Cayenne pepper
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 teaspoon	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped fine
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
1 teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
2 tablespoons	Oil

1. In a non-stick pan, heat the oil, pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
2. Add the okra and turmeric powder. Stir and sprinkle a little water. Cover and cook for 3-4 minutes. Open the lid and stir. Repeat the process a couple of times.
3. Ensure that the seeds of the okra are cooked well.
4. Add the chilly powder, asafoetida powder and salt and mix gently.
5. Remove from fire and garnish with fresh coriander leaves. .

Timely tip: Cook okra in the microwave in just a teaspoon of oil. Add all the ingredients together and keep in the microwave and cook for 5-6 minutes. Remove every two minutes, stir and zap until done.

Tasty Tip: Add a teaspoon of pitlai podi (pg-120) or half teaspoon of cumin and coriander powder to the kari. Stir-fry with chopped onion and tomato and a pinch of garam masala to make a tasty accompaniment for rotis.

Keerai Masiyal spinach mash

2 bunches	**Spinach, chopped**
1½ teaspoons	**Cumin seeds/Jeera**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
1 tablespoon	**Rice flour**
¼ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
1 teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
1	**Red chilly halved (optional)**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Boil ½ a cup of water and salt in a deep pan.
2. Add the chopped spinach and asafoetida powder and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
3. Simmer for 5-7 minutes over a medium heat until water is nearly absorbed and spinach is done. Blend or mash the spinach.
4. Mix rice flour without lumps with water and add to the spinach.
5. In a saucepan, heat the oil, pop the mustard, add red chilly and brown the urad dhal.
6. Addto the spinach pulp and stir over medium heat until it thickens slightly.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Tasty Tip: Add leftover dhal to increase the quantity.

Kudamilagai Paruppu Usili capsicum and steamed dhal

2 medium	**Capsicums/Green peppers cut fine**
¼ cup	**Curry leaves**
¼ teaspoon	**Turmeric/Haldi powder**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the usili:

1 cup	**Red gram/Thuvar dhal and Bengal gram/Chana dhal**
4	**Red chillies**
½ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
¼ teaspoon	**Turmeric/Haldi powder**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ cup	**Sesame oil**

1. Soak the dhals in hot water (enough to cover the dhals) for about 20 minutes.
2. Blend coarsely along with the other ingredients for the usili.
3. Steam for about 10 minutes in a rice cooker or zap in the microwave for 2-3 minutes. Insert a wooden pick/fork and when it comes out clean, the usili is done.
4. Cool the steamed dhal and crumble without lumps by grating it or in the blender using the pulse speed.

Capsicum Usili:

1. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the *usili* mixture and half the curry leaves and stir well for 3-4 minutes. Set aside.
2. Heat a teaspoon of oil and add the chopped capsicum, pinch of salt and turmeric powder.
3. Stir for a minute till the capsicum is crispy.
4. Take care that it is crunchy and not overcooked.
5. Add the crumbled *usili,* rest of the curry leaves and gently stir for 3-4 minutes over a medium heat.
6. Add more salt if required.
7. Stir for 2-3 minutes until soft and crumbly.

Serve as a side dish or mixed with rice.

Timely tip: Make the usili in bulk and freeze. Add to cooked vegetables like beans, avarakkai or broad beans, kothavarangai (gavar ki phalli), pudalangai, cabbage etc.

Vazhaikkai Vadhakal stir-fried banana

2 medium	**Raw banana**
¼ teaspoon	**Chilly powder/Cayenne pepper**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
¼ teaspoon	**Salt**

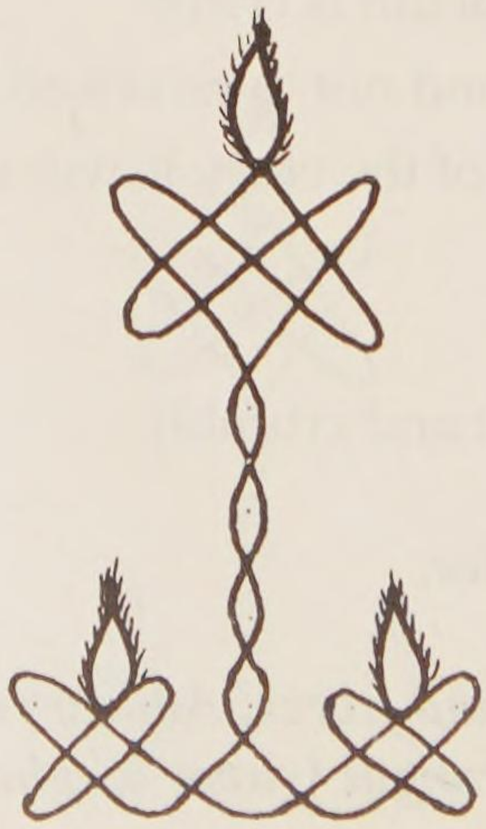
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
1 teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
6 tablespoons	**Oil**

1. Peel the raw banana and chop into fine cubes of quarter inch thickness.
2. Drop the vegetable in a bowl of water to avoid discolouration.
3. Heat the oil in a non-stick pan and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
4. Drain the water and add the chopped vegetable and the curry leaves and stir gently.
5. Cover and simmer over a medium heat for a couple of minutes.
6. Open the lid and stir until the vegetable is soft and done.
7. Add the chilly powder, asafoetida powder and salt.
8. Stir gently so it does not become lumpy. Add an extra teaspoon of oil if it is too dry.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Timely tip: Stir-fried crushed red pepper instead of chilly powder is an interesting option. Grated coconut is also added as a garnish by some families.



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Urulai Kizhangu Podimaas-pg 51

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Thiruvaadharai
Kootu-pg 29

Urulai Kizhangu
vadhakal-p49

Urulai Kizhangu Vadhakal roast potato

4	Potatoes, medium-sized
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
½ teaspoon	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
½ cup	Cilantro/Coriander leaves chopped
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

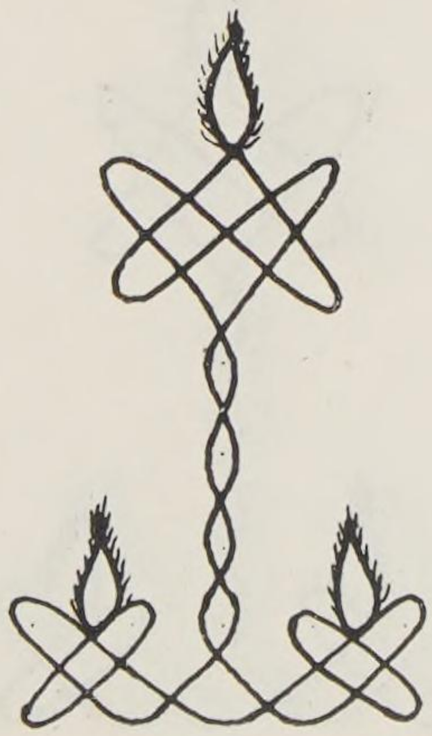
¼ teaspoon	Mustard/Rai
1 teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few	Curry leaves
4 tablespoons	Oil

1. Peel and chop the potatoes into medium-sized cubes.
2. In a non-stick pan heat the oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
3. Add the curry leaves; add potatoes and stir gently.
4. Cover and simmer over a medium flame.
5. Stir every couple of minutes and cook until the potatoes are tender.
6. Add asafoetida powder, sambhar powder and salt. Add a little more oil if required.
7. Stir for 5-6 minutes over a medium flame until crispy.
8. Remove from fire and garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Tasty Tip: Chop the potato with its skin and cook. Make sure you scrub the jacket potatoes well.

Timely tip: Frozen hash browns(available in the US) and baby potatoes make a tasty vadhakal curry. Add onions to the roast.



Urulai Kizhangu Roast crispy potato

5	Potatoes (medium)
1	Onion (large), chopped finely
a pinch	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 teaspoon	Pitlai powder (pg-120)
½ cup	Cilantro/Coriander leaves chopped
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
1 teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few	Curry leaves
4 tablespoons	Oil

1. Boil, peel and chop the potatoes into medium sized cubes.
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard, add the curry leaves and brown the urad dhal.
3. Put in the onions, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and salt.
4. Stir well for a minute until the onions turn transparent.
5. Add the potatoes and the pitlai powder. Keep stirring over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes or until the potatoes are well roasted.
6. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Tasty tip: This crispy dish can also be made with baby potatoes. If too large, you can halve them.

Urulai Kizhangu Podimaas potato crumble

4	Potatoes medium
1½ teaspoons	Lime juice
1 teaspoon	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, finely chopped
¼ teaspoon	Salt

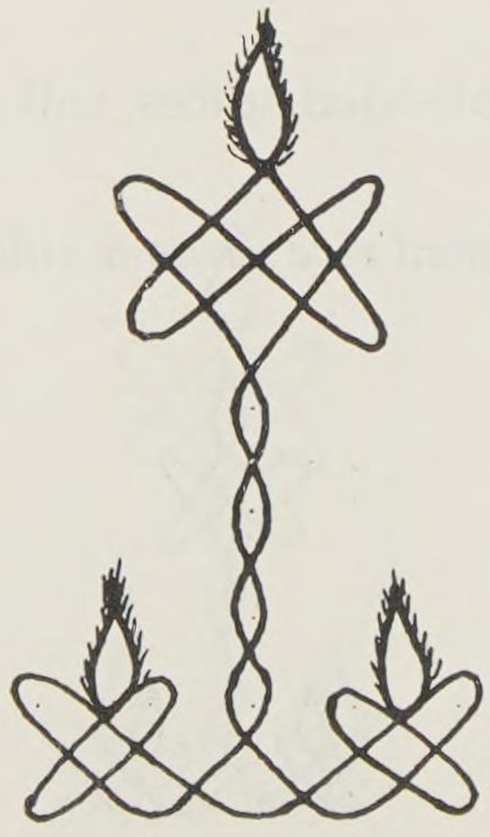
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
1 teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
½ teaspoon	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
2	Green chillies, chopped fine
1 " piece	Ginger, julienned
A few	Curry leaves
1½ teaspoons	Oil

1. Boil, peel and crumble the potatoes.
2. Heat the oil and pop the mustard, brown the dhals and add the green chillies, ginger and curry leaves.
3. Add the crumbled potato and salt and stir well for a couple of minutes.
4. Remove from fire and mix in the lime juice and garnish with chopped fresh coriander leaves.

Serve as a side dish to a meal.

Timely tip: Blend a piece of root ginger and green chllies, add half a tablespoon limejuice and store in the refrigerator. You can keep this for a week; saves time!



Vazhaikkai Podi spicy banana crumble

2	Raw bananas
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the spice powder:

3	Red chillies
3 tablespoons	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
1 teaspoon	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder

- Heat half the oil and add the red chillies and roast until bright red.
- Add the dhals and asafoetida powder and roast until golden.
- Blend into a coarse powder.

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
½ teaspoon	Salt
1½ teaspoons	Oil

1. Chop the banana with skin into 3 or 4 pieces and cook in 2 cups of water.
2. When the skin changes colour and the banana is well cooked, (when pierced with a toothpick/knife/skewer it should come out clean) remove from the stove.
3. Peel and discard the skin. Cool and crumble the vegetable. Set aside.
4. Heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard, brown the urad dhal. Take off the stove.
5. Add the crumbled banana, blended spices, salt and mix well.

Enjoy this crumble mixed with steamed rice or as a side dish.

Pachadis: Tasty Tinglers

The word *pachadi* may have originated from the Tamil word *pachai* meaning green, raw or uncooked. These dishes are like salads but in a semi-liquid form.

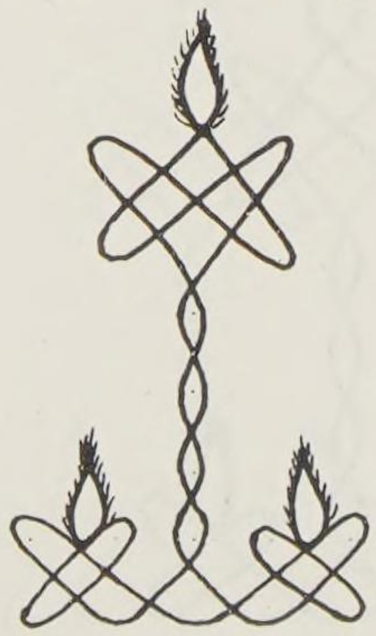
Yoghurt is an important ingredient in Indian cuisine. It cools, it is nutritious and helps the digestion process. Spiced yoghurts are an excellent accompaniment to the main meal.

Fruit can also be made into *pachadis. Pachadis* are an important dish served at special feasts or *virundu saapaadu.*

Home-made yoghurt

Take a cup of warm milk. Add a teaspoon of starter yoghurt. Beat it in with a whisk and set aside in a warm place. Depending on the room temperature it will set in 4 to 8 hours. If you are living in a controlled atmosphere place the warm milk after adding the 'starter' yoghurt in a lighted oven, for about 4 to 4½ hours.

Yoghurt can be blended into a salty or sweet smoothie known as *moru* or buttermilk.



Vellarikkai Thayir Pachadi grated cucumber in yoghurt

1	**Cucumber medium**
2 cups	**Yoghurt, beaten**
1 teaspoon	**Cilamtro/Coriander leaves, chopped**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
1 teaspoon	**Oil/Sesame oil**
¼ teaspoon	**Salt**

1. Grate the cucumber or, chop into small bits.
2. Add salt and yoghurt.
3. Heat the oil, pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
4. Add to the vegetable and yoghurt mixture.
5. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve as an accompaniment to a main course, especially the mixed rice dishes.

Tasty tips: Add finely chopped pieces of a small tomato. The urad dhal gives an interesting texture to the smooth pachadi.

Timely tip: Use grated carrots instead of cucumber!

Idli Thayir Pachadi steamed cup-cakes in yoghurt

10	**small idlis (pg-78)**
2 cups	**beaten yoghurt**
¼ teaspoon	**Salt**

Prepare a coarse paste with:

2 tablespoons	**Grated coconut**
1	**Green chilly**
¼ bunch	**Cilantro/Coriander leaves**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

1 Prepare small (cocktail) idlis in an idli mould. Steam them for 10-12 minutes or until a wooden pick inserted into the batter comes out clean. Keep aside and cool them.
2 Add the paste and salt to the yoghurt.
3 Heat the oil, pop the mustard and mix this into the yoghurt paste.
4 Add the cooled idlis to the yoghurt mixture.

***Try this:** If the small sized idli-moulds are not available use the ordinary moulds. Quarter the large idlis and use.*

***Tasty Tip:** Garnish with boondhis red chilly powder/cayenne pepper and finely chopped coriander leaves.*

Maangai Pachadi raw mango sweet and sour relish

1 large	Raw mango
½ cup	Jaggery/Brown sugar, powdered
¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
1 teaspoon	Oil

1. Peel the skin and slice the mango into thin uneven pieces.
2. Melt jaggery in quarter cup of water over a medium fire and strain to remove scum. Keep aside.
3. In a saucepan, heat the oil and pop the mustard.
4. Add the mango slices and stir gently for 10 seconds. Add quarter cup of water, cover and simmer over a medium heat.
5. Take off the lid after a couple of minutes and stir gently and cook until mushy.
6. Add jaggery and stir and simmer till it thickens like a sauce.

Serve as a side dish.

Timely tip: If the mango is sour, add more jaggery. A semi-ripe mango can also be made into a pachadi. This dish has a sweet and sour taste.

Pazha Pachadi mixed fruit relish

1	Tomato chopped fine
2 slices	Pineapple chopped fine
2	Mangoes, medium, chopped fine
1 cup	Seedless grapes chopped into pieces
½ cup	Sugar

1. Dissolve the sugar in a pan with enough water and boil until it becomes a thin syrup.
2. Add tomatoes to the syrup and simmer for a couple of minutes until it is cooked into a mass.
3. Add seedless grapes, chopped mango and pineapple and stir gently for a couple of minutes. The pineapple should become soft.

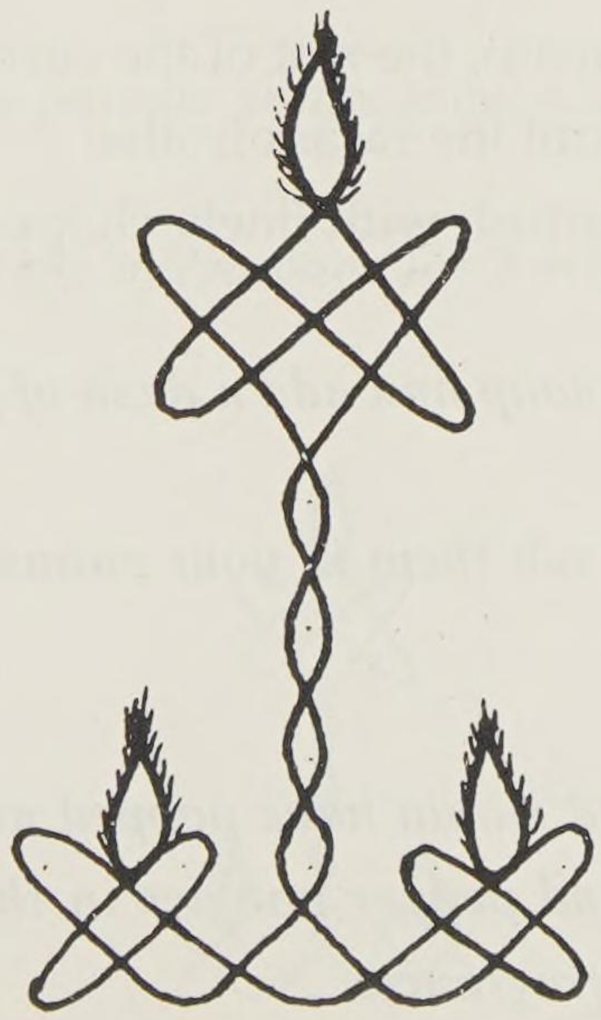
Serve as a side dish.

Timely tip: This dish can be kept refrigerated for a few days. Makes a great dip and spread for sandwiches!

Rasams: Soups for the Soul

Tangy soups with the richness of pepper and cumin seeds are the TamBram food for the soul. Rasams form the second course of a standard meal and is mixed up with steamed rice and eaten often with an appreciative slurp. They can be served as starters in the modern milieu.

Rasam is a liquid dish and its base is mashed up thuvar dhal or the stock from the cooked dhal. The method of eating this liquid course off a banana leaf on festive occasions is an art by itself!



Thakkaali Paruppu Rasam tomato and thuvar dhal broth

¼ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
1 teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
1 tablespoon	Thick tamarind pulp
2 large	Tomatoes
1 teaspoon	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
A few	Curry leaves torn roughly
½ tablespoon	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped finely
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
1 teaspoon	Oil/Ghee

1. Cook the dhal with turmeric powder in 1½ cups of water until mushy. (Or, pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles).
2. In a deep pan boil the tamarind pulp with 1½ cups of water, a whole tomato, sambhar powder, asafoetida powder, half the curry leaves and salt.
3. Simmer over a medium flame for 7-8 minutes.
4. Lightly mash the cooked tomato with a ladle, add the cooked dhal and 1 cup of water and continue to simmer.
5. In a small saucepan, heat the oil/ghee, pop the mustard and cumin seed and add to the *rasam*.
6. Add the other chopped tomato, the rest of the curry leaves and simmer over a low flame for 4-5 minutes or until the rasam froths.
7. Remove from stove and garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve hot with rice or as a starter soup and add a dash of ghee while serving.

***Tasty Tip:** Tear the curry leaves; rub them in your palms before adding to the rasam for a better flavour.*

***Timely tip:** After the mustard and cumin have popped add half a teaspoon each of cumin seed powder, coriander powder and pepper powder in the oil/ghee and add it hot to any rasam. The result is an incredible fragrance.*

Dhideer Rasam instant soup

3 large	Tomatoes
½ teaspoon	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 tablespoon	Lime juice
1 teaspoon	Coriander leaves/Cilantro chopped
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Cumin seed/Jeera
1	Green chilly, slit
1 teaspoon	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)

1. Boil the tomatoes and extract the puree.
2. In a deep pan, boil the sambhar powder, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and salt along with the tomato puree and 2 cups of water.
3. Simmer over a medium flame for 5-7 minutes. Add ¼ cup of water if needed.
4. Melt the ghee in a small pan and pop the mustard and add the cumin seeds.
5. Add and sauté the green chilly and add to the *rasam*.
6. Remove from the stove and stir in the lime juice and garnish with chopped coriander leaves.

Serve hot.

Tasty Tip: Add a pinch of pepper powder to the seasoning for extra flavour.

Timely tip: Zap the tomatoes in the microwave for 2 minutes and save time!

Mysore Rasam spicy special soup

¼ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
1 tablespoon	Thick tamarind pulp
A pinch	Turmeric/Haldi powder
A pinch	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ teaspoon	Salt

Prepare a coarse powder with:

1½ teaspoons	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
1 teaspoon	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
6	Peppercorns/Kali mirch
1	Red chilly
2 teaspoons	Grated coconut
1 teaspoon	Oil

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
½ teaspoon	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)

1. Cook the thuvar dhal in 1½ cups of water until mushy. (Or, pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles)..
2. Roast the coconut for 10 seconds or until light golden and set aside.
3. Heat the oil and brown the coriander, chana dhal, peppercorns and red chilly for 5-7 seconds. Blend along with the coconut into a coarse powder.
5. In a deep pan, boil the tamarind pulp, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and salt in 1½ cups of water. Simmer over a medium flame for 5-7 minutes.
6. Add the blended spices to the *rasam* and simmer for a couple of minutes.
7. Add the mushy thuvar dhal and 2 cups of water to the *rasam* and bring to a boil over a low flame.
8. Melt the ghee in a small pan and pop the mustard and cumin seeds. Add this to the *Mysore rasam*.

Tasty Tip: In many families in Karnataka the dish is made and allowed to sit. Then the clear soup is decanted and consumed as rasam and the sediment portion as sambhar!

Yelumicha Pazham Rasam lime and dhal soup

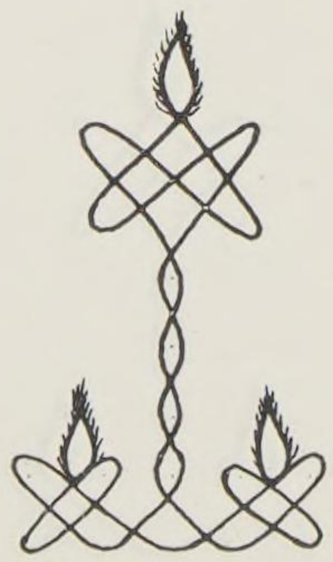
¼ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
2 medium	Tomatoes, chopped into chunks
1 inch piece	Ginger, chopped fine
2	Green chillies, slit
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
2 teaspoons	Lemon juice
1 teaspoon	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
1 teaspoon	Oil

1. Cook the thuvar dhal in 1½ cups of water until mushy. (Or, pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles)..
2. In a deep pan, heat the oil and pop the mustard and cumin seeds.
3. Add tomatoes, ginger, green chillies, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and salt.
4. Add 1½ cups of water and simmer over a medium flame for a couple of minutes.
5. Add the mushy dhal and 2 cups of water and boil.
6. Remove from flame and stir in the lemon juice.
7. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

***Tasty Tip:** This rasam is ideal for people who want to avoid the acidic effect of tamarind. It is often served with a thuvayal for a first course meal. It also accompanies the vathal kuxhambu menu to balance the tamarind content.*



Milagu Rasam healthy peppercorn potage

1 tablespoon	**Thick tamarind pulp**
A few	**Curry leaves**
¼ teaspoon	**Salt**

Prepare a coarse powder with:

1 teaspoon	**Peppercorns/Kali mirch**
1½ tablespoons	**Cumin seeds/Jeera**
A few	**Curry leaves**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
¼ teaspoon	**Cumin seeds/Jeera**
1 teaspoon	**Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)**

1. In a deep pan add the tamarind pulp and salt in 2 cups of water and simmer over a medium flame for about 3 minutes.
2. Melt the ghee in a small pan and pop the mustard and add the cumin seeds.
3. Add the curry leaves and stir for a couple of seconds and add to the tamarind pulp.
4. Add the blended spices, salt and a cup of water.
5. Let it simmer for a couple of minutes or until it becomes frothy on the surface.

Serve hot with well-cooked and mashed rice.

***Tasty Try:** Add four or five roughly diced flakes of garlic to the rasam and boil well. It adds flavour and acts as a good digestive agent. It is ideal for colds and flu symptoms.*

***Tasty Tip:** Allow the spices to settle at the bottom before serving.*

Jeera Rasam cumin broth

1 tablespoon	Thick tamarind pulp
½ teaspoon	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
A few	Curry leaves, torn into half
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the paste:

1 teaspoon	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
2 tablespoons	Cumin seeds/Jeera
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
2-3	Curry leaves

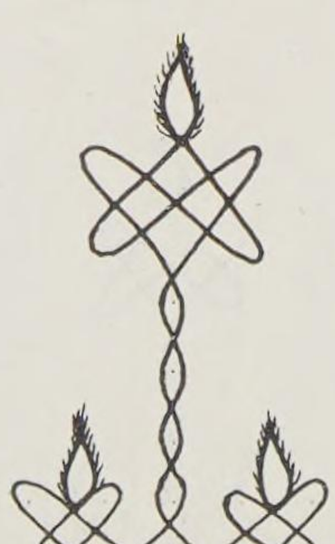
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Cumin seed/Jeera
½ teaspoon	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)

1. Soak the dhal and cumin seeds in ½ cup of hot water for 15 minutes and coarsely blend with the curry leaves.
2. In a deep pan, boil the tamarind pulp, sambhar powder and salt in 2 cups of water for 5-7 minutes.
3. Melt the ghee in a small pan and pop the mustard and cumin seeds. Add asafoetida and curry leaves and stir for a couple of seconds and add to the *rasam*.
4. Add the paste, salt and a cup of water.
5. Simmer for a couple of minutes or until it becomes frothy.

Serve hot with rice and thengai thuvayal

Timely tip: Allow the spices to settle at the bottom before serving.



Poondu Rasam garlic potage

½ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
1½ tablespoons	Thick tamarind pulp
15 flakes	Garlic, peeled
2 medium	Tomatoes chopped medium
½ teaspoon	Sambhar powder (pg-119)
A few	Curry leaves torn into half
½ teaspoon	Salt

Blend into a coarse powder with:

2 teaspoons	Cumin seeds/Jeera
1 teaspoon	Peppercorns/Kali mirch
A few	Curry leaves

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Cumin seed/Jeera
1 teaspoon	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)

1. Cook the dhal in 2½ cups water until mushy. (Or, pressure cook for 3 to 4 whistles).
2. In a deep pan, add the tamarind pulp, garlic, sambhar powder and salt in 1½ cups of water and simmer for 7-8 minutes.
3. Add the mashed dhal, tomatoes, curry leaves, blended spices and 2 cups of water and simmer over a medium flame for 4-5 minutes.
4. In a small pan, heat the ghee and pop the mustard and cumin seeds and add to the boiling *rasam*.
5. Cover and allow the *rasam* to simmer for 4-5 minutes over a low flame or until frothy.

Tasty Tip: A garnish of fresh coriander leaves adds special aroma to any rasam.

Thakkaali Paruppu Rasam-pg 58
Milagu Rasam-pg 62
Yelumiccha Pazha
Rasam-pg 61

Vellarikkai Thayir Pachadi-pg 54

Maangai Pachadi-pg 56

Idli Thayir Pachadi-pg 55

Annaasi Pazha Rasam pineapple broth

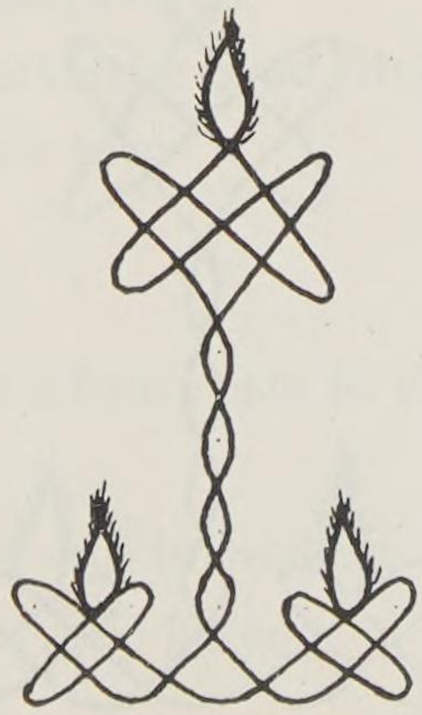
¼ cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
2 slices	Pineapple, peeled, cubed
2	Green chillies, slit
2 tablespoons	Lime juice/tamarind paste
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
A pinch	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
¼ teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
1 teaspoon	Oil/ghee

1. Cook the dhal in 1½ cups of water until mushy. (Or, pressure cook for 2 to 3 whistles).
2. In a deep pan, heat the oil and pop the mustard and cumin seeds.
3. Add 2 cups of water along with the chopped pineapple, green chillies, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and salt. (Add tamarind paste at this stage).
4. Cover and simmer over a medium heat for 5 minutes or until the pineapple is tender.
5. Add the cooked dhal and 1½ cups of water and simmer for 3-4 minutes.
6. Remove from the stove and stir in the lime juice.

Tasty tip: Makes a great soup for a party menu!



Touch of Taste: Chutneys, Relishes and Sauces

Chutneys, meaning to crush, are spicy condiments and are called *Thuvayal* in Tamil Nadu. They may be dry or wet preparations. Dry chutneys are served in powder form. Chutney is often eaten fresh, using strongly flavoured ingredients that are perennial or seasonal vegetables. No preserving agents are used.

Relishes are usually sweeter in taste and made with fruits and vegetables with special taste makers added. Fresh chutneys are prepared cold in a blender and fruit chutneys may require cooking.

Kothsu, meaning sauce, contains some gravy in it and is used as accompaniments for dry dishes like *idli, dosai,* and *pongal.*

Note: As chutmeys are not cooked use bottled/boiled water for the blending.

Thengai Vellai Chutney tiffin mate from fresh coconut

1½ cups	Grated coconut
2 tablespoons	Fried gram/chutney dhal
1	Green chilly
¼ inch piece	Ginger (optional)
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few leaves	Curry leaves torn
½ teaspoon	Oil

1. Blend all the ingredients into a fine paste to make thick chutney, using very little water.
2. Heat the oil, pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
3. Add to the chutney with the curry leaves.

Sigappu Chutney red coconut chutney

1½ cups	Grated coconut
2 tablespoons	Fried gram/Chutney dhal
1	Red chilly/ Chilly powder (a little)
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few leaves	Curry leaves torn
½ teaspoon	Oil

1. Blend all the ingredients into a fine paste to make thick chutney, using very little water.
2. Heat the oil, pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
3. Add to the chutney with the curry leaves.

Thengai Thovayal coconut chutney

1½ cups	Grated coconut
3	Red chillies
½ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 tablespoon	Tamarind paste
1½ teaspoons	Oil
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few	Curry leaves torn coarsely

1. Heat a teaspoon of oil and roast the red chillies until bright red in colour.
2. Add the asafoetida powder stir for 4-5 seconds and remove from the stove.
3. Blend all the ingredients except the seasoning into a grainy thick chutney, using very little water.
4. Heat the remaining oil, pop the mustard, add the dhal and the curry leaves and stir for 5 seconds. Set aside.
5. Add the seasoning to the chutney and mix well.

***Tasty Tip:** This chutney is usually mixed with steamed rice. A traditional combination with this thuvayal is yelumiccha pazham rasam (pg-61) or Jeera rasam (pg-63).*

Vengaaya Thovayal onion chutney

4 large	Onions chopped into slices
4 tablespoons	Bengal gram/Chana Dhal
2–4	Red chillies
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 teaspoon	Tamarind paste
2 tablespoons	Oil
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal

1. Heat a teaspoon of oil and roast the red chillies until bright red in colour.
2. Add the asafoetida powder and brown the chana dhal.
3. Add the onions and stir for 4-5 minutes or until the onions turn golden.
4. Blend all the ingredients into a coarse paste to make a thick chutney, using very little water.
5. Heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard, add the urad dhal and roast until golden.
6. Add to the chutney and mix well.

This thuvayal is to be mixed with steamed rice or with Mysore rasam (pg-60.) or any kootu variety.

Tasty Tip: Add 1" piece of ginger when you roast the onions and the taste changes.

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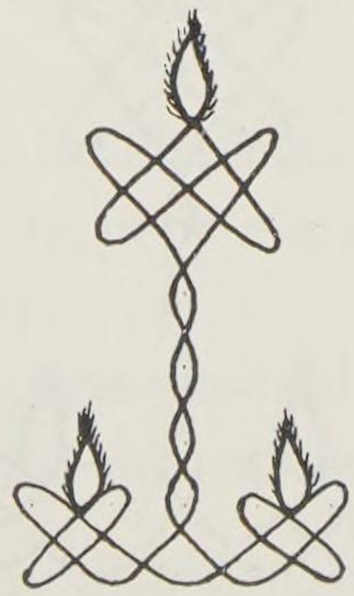
Timely tip: Zap the onions on high for 2 minutes in the microwave. Saves time!



Thakkaali Vengaaya Thovayal tomato onion chutney

An all season accompaniment to any kind of food

9	**Baby onions/Shallots, peeled**
5	**Tomatoes large, chopped medium**
2	**Red chillies**
½ cup	**Bengal gram/Chana dhal**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
¼ cup	**Curry leaves**
¼ teaspoon	**Sambhar powder (pg-119)**
1 teaspoon	**Tamarind paste**
1 cup	**Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped roughly**
¼ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
2 tablespoons	**Oil**

1. Heat 1½ teaspoons of oil and roast the red chillies.
2. As soon as the chillies turn bright red in colour add the dhal and brown it.
3. Add the asafoetida powder and the onions and stir for a minute.
4. Heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
5. Add the tomatoes, curry leaves and sambhar powder and cook for 3-4 minutes or until the tomatoes are well cooked.
6. Blend the coriander leaves and all the ingredients except the seasoning into a coarse paste to make a thick chutney, using very little water.
7. Add the seasoning to the chutney and mix well.

Kothamalli Thovayal fresh coriander leaf chutney

2 bunches/2 cups	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
1½ teaspoons	Tamarind paste
1-2	Red chillies
2	Black peppercorns/Kali mirch
1½ teaspoons	Oil
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal

1 Heat half the oil and roast the chillies until red. Add with the peppercorns and stir for a few seconds. Set it aside.
2 Blend all the ingredients (except the seasoning) into a coarse paste to make a thick chutney, using very little water.
3. Heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal until golden and take it off the stove.
4 Add the seasoning to the chutney and mix well.

Karuveippilai Thovayal curry leaf chutney

4 cups	Curry leaves washed and wiped
1 tablespoon	Tamarind paste
2 large	Red chillies
3	Black peppercorns/Kali mirch
1½ teaspoons	Oil
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal

1 Heat half the oil and roast the red chillies until red. Add with the peppercorns and stir for a few seconds.
2 Add the curry leaves and roast for 20 seconds. Remove from the stove.
3 Blend along with tamarind paste, pepper and salt into a paste to make thick chutney, using very little water.
4 Heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal.
5 Add the seasoning to the chutney and mix well.

Healthy Tip: It is an excellent digestive dish. Mixed with steamed rice and with any gravy!

Kathirikkai Thovayal grilled eggplant paté

The charred, smoky flavour gives this chutney a distinct flavour

1 large	**Eggplant**
1½ teaspoons	**Tamarind paste**
3	**Red chillies**
½ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
1 teaspoon	**Oil**

1. Coat the eggplant with oil and roast evenly on all sides directly over a high flame.
2. Soak in water to cool, peel off the blackened skin and the stalk cleanly; mash the pulp well. Set aside.
3. Heat a teaspoon oil and roast the red chillies until bright red, add the asafoetida powder stir for 5 seconds and remove from flame.
4. Blend along with tamarind and salt into a coarse paste to make thick chutney. Add little water, only if necessary, as the vegetable itself will be mushy.
5. Mix well into the pulp and set aside.
6. Heat the remaining oil and pop the mustard and brown the dhal.
7. Remove from the stove and add to the chutney.

Tasty Tip: An interesting dip or accompaniment to hors d'ouevres

Peerkangai Chutney ridgegourd paté

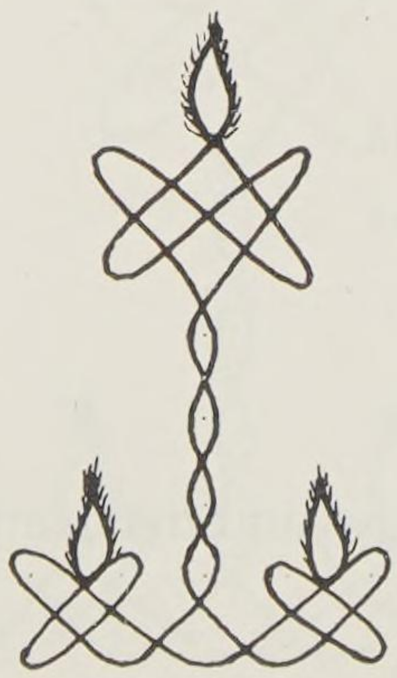
2	Large ridge gourds
1 teaspoon	Tamarind paste
2	Red chillies
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1½ teaspoons	Oil
¼ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal

1. Peel the ridge gourd and chop into medium-sized cubes.
2. Heat a teaspoon oil and roast the red chillies until bright red, add the asafoetida powder and stir for 5 seconds.
3. Add and sauté the ridge gourd. Put in quarter cup of water; cover and simmer over a medium flame for 2-3 minutes or until done. Or, zap in the microwave for 2 minutes on high.
4. Cool and blend along with the tamarind and salt into a coarse paste to make thick chutney, using little water only if necessary.
5. Heat the remaining oil and add the mustard to pop and brown the urad dhal.
6. Add to the chutney and mix well.

***Tasty Tip:** If the skin is clean and tender, do not peel and make the chutney with the green skin. Just peel off the ridges. Onion and/or ginger can be added to give a delicious flavour to this paté Great side dish with idli (pg-78) or dosai (pg-80)!*



Piquant Sauce Accompaniments

Puli Inji tamarind ginger sauce

1½ tablespoons	Tamarind puree
¾ cup	Ginger, chopped fine
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
1 tablespoon	Jaggery/Gur/Molasses
¼ teaspoon	Salt

Prepare a spice powder of:

¼ teaspoon	Fenugreek/Methi
¾ teaspoon	Asafoetida /Hing powder

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard/Rai
1 tablespoon	Oil

1. Roast the fenugreek seeds until brown. Add asafoetida powder and roast for 5 seconds. Blend both to a coarse powder.
2. In a deep pan, heat the oil and pop the mustard.
3. Add the tamarind pulp, ginger, turmeric powder and salt.
4. Cover and simmer over a medium heat for 7-8 minutes or until it thickens slightly.
5. Stir in the blended spices, jaggery and cook until it thickens.

Tasty Tip: Add finely chopped green chillies. Try pulverising orange skins and adding to this recipe. TamBram marmalade!

Puli Thokku tamarind chilly sauce

Red chilly	4
Thick tamarind pulp	2 tablespoons
Brown sugar	2 tablespoons
Curry leaf	a few
Salt	to taste

1 Place the ingredients in a blender and make an instant sauce.

Serve with pidi Kuzhakattai (pg-90).

Vengaaya Gotsu onion and tamarind mash

1½ tablespoons	Thick tamarind pulp
2	Onion (medium) chopped fine
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 tablespoon	Rice flour
½ teaspoon	Salt

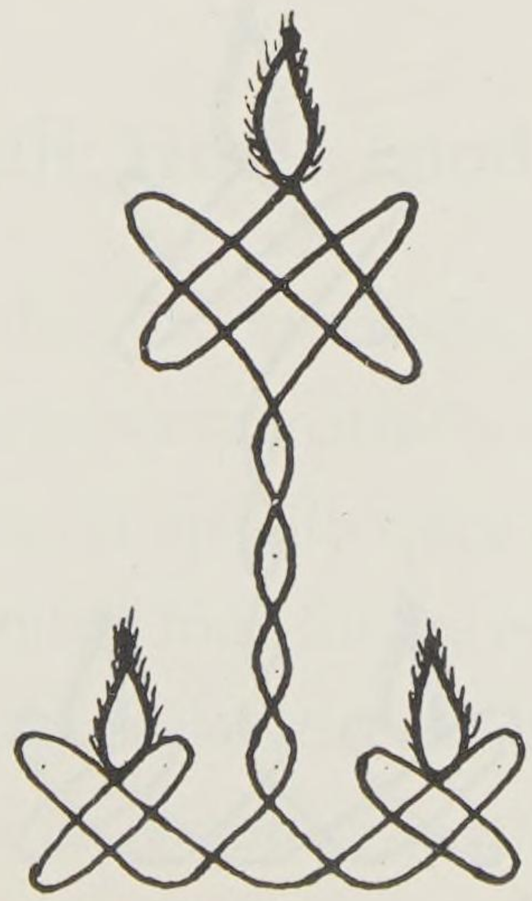
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
4	Green chilly, chopped fine
1 teaspoon	Oil

1 In a deep pan heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the green chillies and stir for a few seconds.
2 Stir in the onions, tamarind pulp, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and salt with a cup of water. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for 5-7 minutes or until the onions are soft. (Or, pressure cook for a whistle).
3 Dissolve the rice flour in a little water and add to the boiling gravy. Simmer over a low flame for 2-3 minutes or until it thickens slightly.

Serve hot with arisi uppuma (pg-87)..

Tasty Tip: A little brown sugar will enhance the taste of this dish.



Sutta Kathirikkai Gotsu grilled eggplant gravy

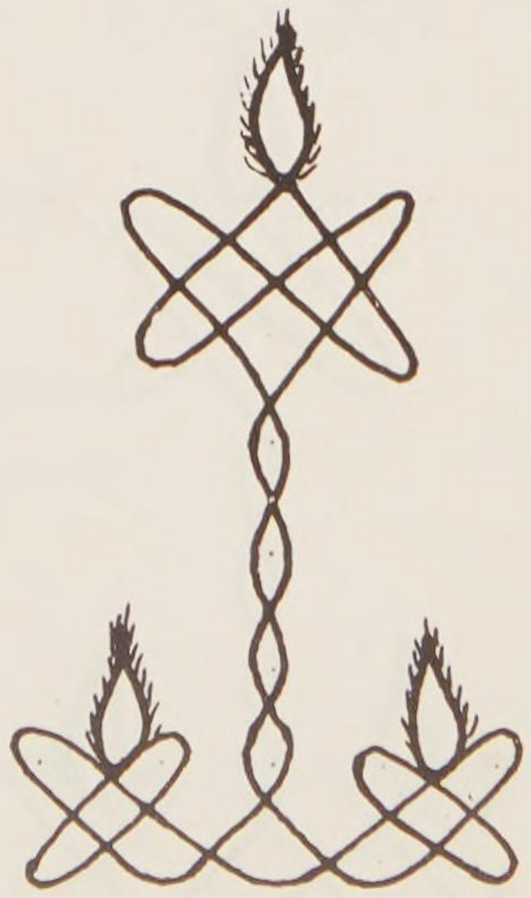
1 large	Eggplant/Aubergine/Brinjal
1 tablespoon	Thick tamarind pulp
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
4	Green chillies chopped fine
1 teaspoon	Oil

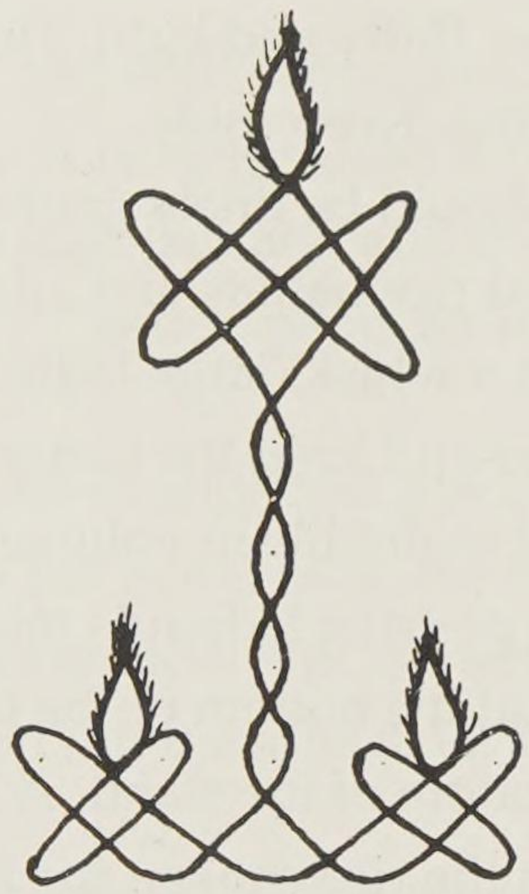
1. Coat the eggplant with oil and roast directly over flame till skin is evenly charred on all sides and the vegetable is soft.
2. Soak in water to cool and peel off the blackened skin and the stalk and mash the pulp well. Set aside.
3. In a deep pan, heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the green chillies.
4. Stir in the tamarind pulp, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder and salt.
5. Mix them all gently. Add half cup water to the mashed eggplant. Remove from fire.

Serve with venn pongal (pg-12).



Tiffins: Anytime Snacks

These exciting dishes can be eaten for breakfast, lunch, teatime, and supper! The idea of tiffin is part of Tam Bram 'Palaharam' tradition. On fasting days like Amavasai and Ekadasi, cooked rice was not eaten in the evening. Only the main meal was consumed during the day. So in the night a tiffin was prepared - with no onion or garlic.



Idli: Home Food

Popularly known as the breakfast dish of South India, Idlis are the equivalent of bread. It is an ideal dish to make and keep, serve instantly or take on travels. It is hundred percent healthy as it is steamed. Jazz it up with spicy accompaniments or serve bland with simple chutneys. Idlis are comfort food for the recovering patient. Parboiled rice is rice boiled in the husk. Parboiling makes rice easier to process by hand, improves its nutritional profile, and changes its texture. The practice of parboiling rice is more

than two thousand years old. Idlis are softer in texture because of this quality of rice. You can make-do with ordinary rice but avoid Basmati.

Idli steamed savoury cup-cake

6 cups	**Boiled rice**
2½ cups	**Black gram/White Udad dhal husked**
1½ teaspoons	**Salt**

1. Soak the rice in 1½ -2 cups water for 4 to 8 hours. (It is easier to grind if you are using a blender).
2. Soak the dhal for about 1 hour in just enough water. Even if the dhal swells and absorbs all the water, do not add more water.
3. Blend the dhal till it becomes fluffy and light. The best way to do it is to add water gradually during the blending. Keep aside.
4. Blend the rice. The dough should be finely grainy and of a dropping consistency.
5. Mix thoroughly the dhal and rice batters and add salt. Try to incorporate air into the batter by beating it with a whisk/large ladle.
6. Half fill an airtight container and keep the batter in a warm place.
7. Allow it to ferment and rise to double in volume. (It may take about 8-9 hours).
8. Mix the batter again before pouring ladlefuls into greased idli-moulds and place it in a rice-cooker with water at the bottom of the idli maker stand. Make sure that the water does not touch the bottom of the stand. A large steamer can be used as well.
9. If the water is pre-heated in the rice cooker, the idlis can be prepared in 5-7 minutes. When a wooden toothpick/fork is inserted it should come out clean.
10. Dampen a spatula and scoop out the idlis from the moulds. Store in a hot case.

Serve with araithu... sambhar (pg-16.), coconut chutney (pg-67.), idli-milagai podi (pg-121).

***Timely tip:** In colder climates the fermenting process may take longer. Switch on the oven light and place the batter inside to ferment. Idlis can be reheated in the microwave cooker by dampening each cake with a little water.*

If you do not have idli-moulds, pour into a shallow saucepan/wok/microwave dish and steam. Idlis can be steamed in egg poachers too!

***Tasty Tip:** Both idli and dosai may be prepared with the same batter. Add a little water and keep the batter a little more fluid for making dosais.*

Kancheepuram Idli spicy cup-cake

1½ cups	Boiled rice
½ cup	Black gram/White Urad dhal husked
½ cup	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
1 teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
1 inch piece	Ginger crushed
1 teaspoon	Peppercorns/Kali Mirch
A few	Curry leaves
1 tablespoon	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¾ teaspoon	Salt

1. Soak the rice and urad and chana dhals together for about 2 hours. Blend into a coarse paste.
2. Coarsely blend the pepper, add with salt and mix well.
3. Ferment the batter for about 8-10 hours until it increases in volume.
4. Heat the ghee in a in a non-stick pan and add the curry leaves. Stir for 3 seconds.
5. Add cumin, ginger, coarsely blended peppercorns with salt, curry leaves to the batter and mix well.
6. Pour the batter in greased idli-moulds and place it in a rice-cooker.
7. If you pre-heat the water in the rice cooker, the idlis can be prepared in 10-12 minutes. When a wooden toothpick/fork is inserted it should come out clean.
8. Dampen a spatula and scoop out the idlis from the moulds. Store in a hot case.

Serve the spiced idlis with Puli inji (pg-74.), coconut chutney (pg-67.) or with a kotsu/araithu... sambhar (pg-75/16).

***Timely tip:** In colder climates, you will need to soak the rice and dhals for a little longer time. The fermenting process also takes longer. Switch on the oven light and place the batter inside to ferment.*

***Healthy Tip:** Try adding grated carrots, peas and other finely chopped vegetables on top of the batter before steaming.*

Dosai or pancake variations:

A universal favourite, dosais are synonymous with South Indian cuisine. They can be eaten with anything—even plain sugar and ghee as many Southies will confess to having eaten as kids. No dosai ever turns out identical….it can be soft, crunchy, crispy, fat, thin or paper. The expertise comes with repeat attempts.

Tricks to making a dosai is to heat up the griddle, reduce the flame to medium, dribble a little oil on the hot surface and use a flat spoon or a katori to pour out and quickly spread the batter round and flat on the griddle. The first one or two will be disappointing. Do not despair. As you make them, they will turn out just fine. Try adding a drop of ghee before you flip the dosai to cook on the other side. You can't hurry with a dosai! It has to be served one by one for spectacular compliments!

Timely tip: Idli batter keeps fresh in the refrigerator. If it turns sour, make it into dosais or oothappams.

Ulundhu Dosai rice and dhal pancake

4 cups	**Boiled rice**
1½ cups	**Black gram/Urad dhal husked**
1½ teaspoons	**Salt**
½ cup	**Oil**

1 Soak the rice in 1½ - 2 cups of water. Soak the dhal separately in a cup of wate
2. Blend both separately and finely.
3. Both idli and dosai may be prepared with the same batter; add a little water for preparing dosai.
4. Heat a non-stick shallow sauce pan or an iron griddle. Lightly grease with sesame or vegetable oil.
5. Keep the heat on medium throughout.
6. Pour a ladle of the batter. Use the bottom of the ladle to spread the batter out thinly, using a spiral motion.
7. Drizzle oil around edges of the dosai and on the top with a light hand.
8. When the bottom of the dosai is crisp and golden, turn it over and let the other side be done in 5-7 seconds.

Serve with sambhar (pg-16.), coconut chutney (pg-67) or idli-milagai podi (pg-121).

Idli-pg 78

Pesarat-pg 83

Oothappam-pg 81

Aappam-pg 85

Adai-pg 84

Appam Stew-pg 39

Timely tip: In colder climates, you will need to soak the rice and dhal for a little longer time.

The fermenting process also takes longer. Switch on the oven light and place the batter inside to ferment.

Tasty Tip: Sprinkle idli-milagai podi and drizzle half teaspoon oil on the freshly spread batter and close lid for a minute. Or, add/drizzle a dash of ghee for a fabulous flavour. Open the lid fold the dosai/pancake and serve.

Variations of Dosais Mendhiya /Fenugreek Dosai/Pancake

Soak 2 tablespoons of fenugreek seeds with the black gram/urad dhal and blend to make mendiya dosai.

Oothappam vegetable pancake

The word 'oothu' means to pour and Appam means plump. The structure of the dosai is derived from the small appachatti in which they are cooked.

5 cups	**Idli batter**
1 medium	**Capsicum**
1 medium	**Carrot**
1 large	**Onion**
½ cup	**Oil**

1. Prepare the batter by following the method as given for *idli* on (Pg-78).
2. Chop all the vegetables finely, mix and keep aside.
3. Heat a non-stick saucepan or an iron griddle. Lightly grease with sesame or vegetable oil.
4. Keep on medium flame and pour a ladle of the dosai batter.
5. Pour the batter in the middle and quickly spread into a circle. Make sure not to make it thin as the oothappam is a plump dosai.
6. Sprinkle vegetables evenly over it. Drizzle oil around edges, and on top.
7. When the underneath turns a nice golden colour, turn it over, and cook the other side for 2 minutes until the vegetables turn golden brown.
8. Press the pancake down with a spatula so the vegetables are evenly golden.
9. Remove from griddle and serve hot.

Serve with any gravy, chutney or powder preparations

Tasty Tip: For a soft and crisp oothappam, keep the batter thicker than for dosai.

Masala Dosai stuffed potato pancake

3 cups	Dosai/Pancake batter

For the filling:

2	Potatoes large
2	Onions, medium, chopped fine
2	Tomatoes medium, chopped fine (optional)
1	Green chilly, slit
¼ teaspoon	Ginger paste
¼ teaspoon	Sambhar powder (pg-119) (optional)
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
A pinch	Asafoetida/Hing powder
1 tablespoon	Lime juice
2 teaspoons	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped
¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal husked
1 teaspoon	Oil
½	Salt

1. Boil the potatoes. Peel the skin and crumble into small bits.
2. In a saucepan, heat the oil, and pop the mustard and roast the urad dhal.
3. Add onions, potatoes, tomatoes (optional), green chilly, ginger paste, sambhar powder (optional), turmeric powder, asafoetida powder, salt and a cup of water.
4. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for 4-5 minutes until it thickens.
5. Open the lid and keep stirring every 2 minutes.
6. Remove from the stove and mix in the lime juice.
7. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves. Keep aside.
8. Make dosais (Pg-80).
9. When both sides are done, spread the potato filling onto the second side and fold the dosai into crispy crescents.

Serve with any sambhar (pg-16), kotsu (pg-75), idli-milagai podi (pg-121) mixed in sesame oil.

Tasty Tip:Add 2 tablespoons of semolina/rava to the dosai batter for a crispier dosai. You can spread coconut chutney (pg-67) on the surface of the dosai before filling it with the potato.

Timely tip: Make a butter masala dosai by placing a blob of butter between the folds of the crescent dosai!

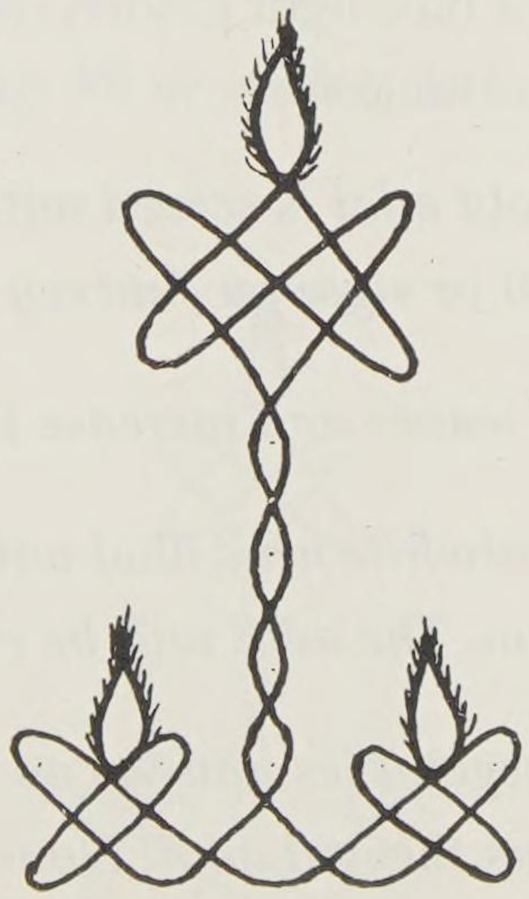
Pesarat

green gram pancake

3 cups	Green gram/Yellow moong dhal split
½ cup	Rice
1 inch piece	Ginger
4-5	Green chillies
1 medium	Onion, chopped fine (Optional)
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ cup	Curry leaves
2 teaspoons	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, finely chopped
1 teaspoon	Salt
½ cup	Oil

1. Soak the rice and dhal for about 30 minutes.
2. Drain off most of the water and blend along with the ginger, green chillies and salt into a thick batter.
3. Add onions (optional), asafoetida powder, curry leaves, finely chopped coriander leaves and mix well.
4. Prepare like dosais. (pg-80).

Serve hot with any coconut chutney (pg-67), mango thokku/pickle or puli inji (pg-74)



Adai vegetable and dhal pancake

Adai means thick or chunky

1 cup	**Rice**
½ cup	**Red gram/Thuvar dhal**
¼ cup	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
5	**Red chillies**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
1 medium	**Carrot, grated**
¼ piece	**Cabbage, chopped fine**
1 large	**Onion, chopped fine**
A few	**Curry leaves**
½ cup	**Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped fine**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**
½ cup	**Oil**

1. Soak the rice and the dhals for about 30 minutes. Strain the water and keep aside.
2. Blend the rice and dhals along with the red chillies, asafoetida and salt into a very coarse batter, using very little water.
3. Add all the chopped vegetables, curry leaves and coriander leaves to the batter.
4. Add ¼ cup of the strained water if the batter is too thick.
5. Heat a non-stick saucepan/wok or an iron griddle. Lightly grease with sesame or vegetable oil.
6. Keep the heat on medium throughout. Pour a ladle of the batter.
7. Use the bottom of the ladle to spread the batter out thinly using a spiral motion.
8. Drizzle oil around edges and make a hole in the centre of the adai and drizzle oil in it.
9. When the underneath turns a nice light golden colour, turn it over and cook the other side for 30 seconds or until done.

Traditionally in a Tambram household adai is served with freshly made butter and lumps of jaggery. Serve hot with avial (Pg-38) or sigappu chutney (Pg-67).

Tasty Tip: Add spinach, drumstick leaves and increase the nutritional value of the dish!

The Palghat Brahmin uses black gram/white urad dhal with the black skin. Soak it separately for 1/2 hour more and blend with skin. The adai will be crunchier and healthier.

Timely tip:Instead of onions and vegetables add ½ cup of grated coconut and ½ teaspoon more of hing powder. Makes delicious thengai adai! Non-stick pan works best for pancakes.

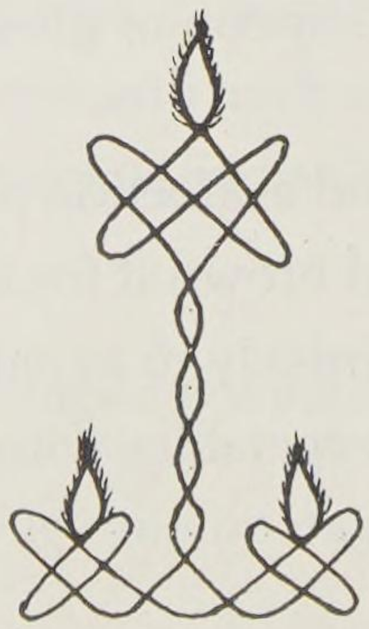
Aapam fluffy Kerala pancake

Kerala is well known for its fluffy aapams. Make these aapams in a non-stick aapam saucepan/wok with a lid or a kadai/wok. Traditionally aapam is made from fresh toddy and rice!

2 cups	**Rice**
½ cup	**Cooked rice**
2 cups	**Coconut milk**
2 teaspoons	**Sugar**
½ teaspoon	**Dry yeast**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**
½ cup	**Oil**

1. Wash the rice well and soak for 2 hours.
2. Drain and blend rice finely with a little coconut milk.
3. Add the cooked rice to this and blend again for 30-40 seconds.
4. Add the sugar and salt and the rest of the coconut milk to the blended rice.
5. Dissolve the yeast in two teaspoons of warm water and beat it into the batter to incorporate air. The batter should be of dropping consistency.
6. Cover batter and keep aside for 2 to 3 hours.
7. Grease an aapam saucepan/wok with oil and heat over a moderate fire.
8. Pour a ladle of the batter and holding the saucepan/wok's handle give it a swirl so that a thin crispy lacy layer forms on the sides while the centre remains thick. This is similar to making crepes.
9. Close with a lid over a low flame for a few seconds while the top layer gets cooked.
10. Scoop the *aapam* with a wooden spatula and serve hot.

Serve with ishtu (vegetable stew) (pg-39) or with sweetened coconut milk.



Uppumas: The Crumble Story

The South Indian equivalent of fast food is Uppuma meaning salted mash.

Rava Uppuma savoury semolina snack

1 cup	Semolina/Sooji
2 medium	Onions, chopped fine
6-7	Beans, chopped fine
1 medium	Carrot, chopped fine
1 small	Eggplant/Aubergine/Brinjal, chopped fine (optional)
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
½ teaspoon	Fresh ginger paste
3 tablespoons	Oil
2 teaspoons	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
½ teaspoon	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
3	Green chillies, slit
A few	Curry leaves
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
2 tablespoons	Clarified butter/ghee (pg-117)

1. Boil 2 cups of water and salt in a deep saucepan/wok.
2. Add the onions, beans, eggplant (optional) and carrots.
3. Cover and simmer over a medium heat for 5-7 minutes until vegetables are cooked. Decant into another dish and set aside.
4. In the same saucepan/wok, add 2 cups of water and salt and boil.
5. In another saucepan, heat a tablespoon of ghee, pop the mustard and brown the dhals.
6. Add the chillies, curry leaves and asafoetida powder.
7. Gradually add the semolina and brown it for a minute on a low flame.
8. Add the boiling water and stir briskly to avoid lumps.
9. When it becomes soft, add the vegetables with water, turmeric powder and ginger paste.

10. Stir for a minute until the whole mixture leaves the saucepan/wok in a rounded swirl. Remove from the stove and pour in the remaining ghee.
11. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve hot with white chutney (pg-67) and a sambhar (pg-16)

***Tasty Tip:** The secret of a spongy and soft uppuma is in roasting the semolina over a low fire for 4-5 minutes before cooking.*

***Timely tip:** The trick to making uppuma in a jiffy is to store semolina after roasting it in a dry wok or zapping it for a minute or two in the microwave. Keep a kettle of hot water handy and voila! Uppuma is ready!*

Arisi Uppuma cracked rice crumble

1½ cups	**Rice**
½ cup	**Bengal gram/Chana dhal (optional)**
2 tablespoons	**Grated coconut**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
½ tablespoon	**Bengal gram/Chana dhal**
5	**Green chillies cut into rounds**
A few	**Curry leaves**
½ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
4 tablespoons	**Coconut oil/Vegetable oil**

1. Powder the rice and dhal (optional) very coarsely in a dry blender.
2. Cook the rice and dhal with 3 cups of water. (Or, pressure-cook it for 2 whistles).
3. In a deep saucepan/wok, heat the oil, pop the mustard, brown the urad and chana dhals, green chillies, curry leaves and asafoetida powder.
4. Add the cooked rice, grated coconut and salt and stir gently for 8-10 minutes until it turns soft and crumbly.

***On non-fasting days serve hot with Vengaaya kotsu** (pg-75).*

***Timely tip:** This dish is served as palagaram on days of fasting. No onion accompaniments please!*

Godhumai Rava Uppuma cracked wheat crumble

1 cup	Cracked wheat/dhalia
1½ cups	Water
1 large	Onion chopped fine
2 tablespoons	Grated coconut
2	Medium green chillies, chopped
½ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
2 tablespoons	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped
A few	Curry leaves torn into half
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
1 teaspoon	Oil

1. Heat the oil and pop the mustard. Add the green chillies, onions and half the curry leaves. Stir for 10 seconds.
2. To this add the water, cracked wheat, salt and asafoetida powder. Stir for 5 seconds until the salt is fully absorbed into the gravy.
3 Close the lid of the pan and cook over a medium flame for 7 minutes until the water is fully absorbed. (Alternatively pressure cook for 2 whistles).
4. Keep stirring for 2 minutes until the water evaporates fully and the snack turns into a crumbly texture.
5. Add the rest of the curry leaves and grated coconut. Mix well and remove from the stove.
6. Garnish with coriander leaves.

Timely tip: Omit the onion and add ½ cup of roasted and crushed peanuts and serve for festive days or to orthodox visitors who don't eat onions.

Tasty Tip: Add 1 cup mixed vegetables, 2 cup roasted moong dal with the wheat and turn it into a khichdi/pongal.

Semia Uppuma-pg 89

Thayir vadai-pg 95

Rava Uppuma-pg 86

Medhu vadai-pg 93

Paruppu
Usili Sevai-pg 92

Godhumai Rava Uppuma-pg 88

Semia Uppuma vegetable and vermicelli snack

1½ cups	Vermicelli
6-7	French beans, chopped fine
2 medium	Carrots, chopped fine
¼ cup	Peas, shelled
2 medium	Onions, chopped fine
1 medium	Capsicum, chopped fine
1 tablespoon	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped
2 tablespoons	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
½ teaspoon	Black gram/White urad dhal
4	Green chillies, slit
A few	Curry leaves torn roughly
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
2 tablespoons	Oil

1. Boil 1½ cups of water and salt in a deep saucepan/wok. Add the beans, carrots and peas and toss with a ladle until rich in colour.
2. Cover and simmer over a medium flame for 5-7 minutes or until done. Set aside.
3. In another saucepan/wok heat a tablespoon ghee and pop the mustard. Add the cumin and brown the urad dhal. Put in the green chillies, curry leaves and asafoetida powder. Add the vermicelli and stir gently for a couple of minutes on a low flame.
4. Add onions, capsicum, a pinch of salt and stir. Sprinkle a quarter cup of water and cover for a minute. Open the lid and stir for a couple of minutes. Add the boiled vegetables with water and stir gently so that the vermicelli does not turn lumpy. When it is soft and done, add the remaining ghee stir, close lid for 10 seconds; remove from fire.
5. Garnish with finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve hot with white coconut chutney (pg-67).

Pidi Kuzhakattai steamed rice snack

2 cups	Rice
1tablespoon	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
2 tablespoons	Grated coconut
½ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing
½ teaspoon	Salt

For seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
5	Green chillies, chopped fine
a few	Curry leaves torn roughly
3 teaspoons	Oil

1. Blend the rice into a very coarse powder and set aside.
2. Soak chana dhal in hot water for 10 minutes.
3. Cook the rice powder and salt in 5 cups of water.
4. In a deep saucepan/wok, heat the oil and pop the mustard.
5. Add the green chillies, and curry leaves. Add the soaked dhal and rice, asafoetida and grated coconut to it and stir gently for 8-10 minutes until it turns soft and the water evaporates. (Alternatively pressure-cook for two whistles).
6. Remove from the stove and shape into oval/round balls with your palms.
7. Steam the Kuzhakattais in a rice-cooker for 15 minutes.
8. Allow it to cool slightly before taking it out with tongs into a serving bowl.

Serve with Puli inji, (pg-74), and/or chutneys (pg-67).

Aval / Puli Uppuma beaten rice savoury

1 cup	**Beaten rice/Poha thick variety**
1 tablespoon	**Tamarind pulp**
¼ teaspoon	**Turmeric powder/Haldi**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
A few	**Curry leaves torn into half**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

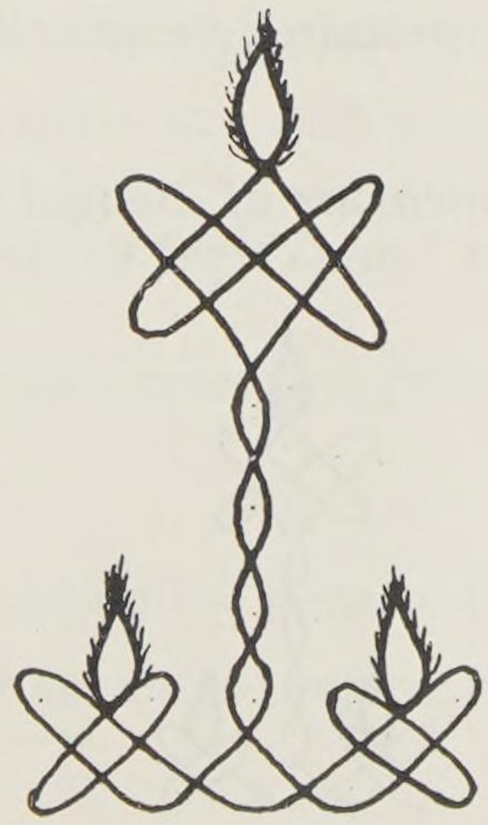
For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
1 tablespoon	**Oil**

1. In a colander, wash the beaten rice under a tap.
2. Add water sufficient to cover it for 15 minutes or until it doubles in volume. To this add asafoetida, turmeric powder, salt and tamarind pulp. Mix well.
3. In a deep non-stick pan heat the oil and pop the mustard seeds.
4. Add the curry leaves and the aval. Stir gently for a minute and a half until the aval is soft and crumbly.

Serve hot or cold as an evening snack.

Tasty Tip: Garnish with grated coconut.



Paruppu Usili Sevai steamed dhal crumble pasta

Chinese rice sticks or vermicelli or Instant Rice 'sevai' is available in stores. Soak the dried strands in cold/hot water for the specified time (as given in the packet) and drain.

1 packet/500 grams	**Rice vermicelli/Vermicelli**

For the usili:

1 cup	**Red gram/Thuvar dhal**
3-4	**Red chillies**
½ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**
¼ teaspoon	**Turmeric/Haldi powder**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard/Rai**
½ teaspoon	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
4 tablespoons	**Sesame oil**

1. Soak thuvar dhal in hot water for about 20 minutes.
2. Drain the water and blend with the red chillies, asafoetida, turmeric and salt to make a coarse paste.
3. Steam for 20 minutes in a rice cooker. Alternatively, zap in microwave for 2 -2½ minutes on high. Insert a wooden pick/fork and ensure it comes out clean.
4. Cool and crumble without lumps.
5. Heat the oil and pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal. Add the usili crumble and the curry leaves and stir well for 3-4 minutes.
6. Mix the usili gently with the prepared vermicelli, 'rice sticks' or 'sevai.'

Tasty Tip: Some families add half measure of Bengal gram/Chana dhal to the thuvar dal for the usili.

SAVOURY DOUGHNUTS: Vadais

The vadai is associated with idlis and is an important part of breakfast and festive occasions.

Medhu Vadai black gram doughnut

2 cups	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
4-5	**Green chillies**
2 tablespoons	**Sago (optional)**
2 tablespoons	**Cilantro/Coriander leaves**
for frying	**Oil**
¼ teaspoon	**Salt**

1. Soak the sago in a cup of water for 10 to 15 minutes. Soak the urad dhal for about 20 minutes.
2. Drain off all the water and blend along with the chillies and salt into a fine thick batter. A blob of blended batter should float in water.
3. Soak the sago in a cup of hot water for 10-15 minutes. When the sago grows double in size squeeze out the water fully and mix well with the batter.
4. Add the chopped coriander leaves and mix well. Heat oil in a deep saucepan/wok and maintain a medium heat throughout.
5. Take a square piece of plastic sheet or a banana leaf. Wet it with water, place in the palm and pat a ladle of the batter. Flatten it.
6. Make a hole in the centre of the dough and slip it gently off the foil/banana leaf into the hot oil.
7. Prepare doughnuts of quarter inch thickness and you can fry 3-4 *vadais* at the same time. With a slotted ladle, turn them gently until golden in colour.
8. Spread an absorbent paper napkin in a dish and place the *vadais* on it.

Serve these hot crisp vadais with chutney (pg-67) and araithu... sambhar (pg-16).

***Tasty Tip:** Add chopped onions, grated carrot and finely shredded cabbage to the batter to change the flavour of the vadai.*

***Timely tip:** Substitute a medium-sized boiled potato. Chop into small bits and blend with the dhal. It binds better and makes it easier to prepare the vadais!*

Masala Vadai crispy bengal gram doughnut

2 cups	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
3	Green chillies
3-4	Red chillies
3 inch piece	Ginger
1 large	Onion, chopped fine
½ kilo	Baby onions/shallots, cut fine
A few	Curry leaves, torn into bits
½ cup	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped fine
¼ teaspoon	Garam masala
1/3 teaspoon	Salt
For frying	Oil

1. Soak the chana dhal (preferably in hot water) for about 20 minutes or until it grows in volume. Remove 2 tablespoons of it and set aside.
3. Drain off most of the water and blend along with the green chillies, red chillies, ginger, a teaspoon of the chopped onion and salt into a very coarse mixture.
4. Add the remaining chopped onions, curry leaves, coriander leaves and the 2 tablespoons of the soaked chana dhal that was set aside and, mix well.
5. Heat oil for frying. Maintain a medium heat throughout.
6. Take a square piece of plastic sheet or a banana leaf, wet it with water and holding it in the palm, pat a tablespoon of batter on it.
7. Prepare patties of ½ inch thickness and drop gently into the hot oil. You can fry 3-4 *vadais* at a time.
8. With a slotted spoon, turn them gently until dark golden in colour.
9. Spread an absorbent paper napkin in a dish and place the *vadais* on it.

Serve hot and crisp as an evening snack.

Timely tip: Garam masala is a North Indian mixed spice powder, available in all the Indian groceries.

Thayir Vadai dhal doughnut dipped in spicy yoghurt

1½ cups	Black gram/White urad dhal
2 tablespoons	Kaaraa boondhi for sprinkling (optional)
¼ teaspoon	Cayenne pepper/Chilly powder, for sprinkling (optional)
4 cups	Yoghurt beaten
For deep frying	Oil
½ teaspoon	Salt

To blend into a coarse paste:

½ cup	Grated coconut
2	Green chilly
½ cup	Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped
A pinch	Salt

1. Soak the black gram/urad dhal for about 20 minutes in sufficient hot water to dissolve it.
2. Drain off all the water and blend along with the chillies and salt into a fine thick batter. A blob of blended batter should float in water.
3. Heat oil for frying and maintain medium heat throughout. Take a square piece of plastic sheet or a banana leaf, wet it with water and holding it in the palm, pat a tablespoon of batter on it.
4. Prepare patties of 1 inch thickness make a hole in the centre and drop it gently into the hot oil. You can fry 3-4 *vadais* at a time. With a slotted spoon turn them gently until light golden in colour.
5. Dip *vadais* in hot water, squeeze out the water and place them in a rounded flat bowl with a rim.
6. Mix the paste and salt with the yoghurt and pour over the vadais and soak for an hour.
6. Sprinkle *boondhi/crispy chana dhal savoury,* red chilly powder and finely chopped coriander leaves.

Serve as a snack or as an accompaniment.

***Tasty Tip:** Kaaraa boondhi is spicy bengal gram snack available in the Indian store. As a garnish, it gives a crispness and an enhanced taste to the dish.*
Add less salt in the batter as the spiced yoghurt has salt.

Kuzhakattai rice steamed parcels/dimsums

Follow this recipe carefully to prepare the most delicous Kuzhakattais It is prepared on Ganesh Chathurthi the birthday of the elephant headed Lord and on Varalakshmi Vratham.

Dough for the parcels:

2 cups	**Rice**
4 cups	**Water**
1 cup	**Milk lukewarm**
A pinch	**Salt**
2 tablespoons	**Sesame oil**

1. Soak the rice in 2 cups of hot water for 15-20 minutes. Blend to a fine paste. Add the rest of the milk, oil and salt to make a very thin batter.
2. Pour the batter in a non-stick saucepan. Keep the flame low and stir constantly for 12-13 minutes until the batter leaves the sides of the pan, turns into a soft dough and rolls itself firmly round the ladle. Continue stirring for a minute more. Remove and empty into a wide rimmed dish
3. Smear the palms with a teaspoon of oil and knead this dough to ensure there are no lumps. Wet a thin muslin cloth to tuck around the dough and close it with a lid.
4. Grease the hands with a drop of oil and make lemon-sized, firm marbles of the dough. Mould them to round or oval/boat shape, according to the fillings.
5. The Kuzhakattai is a little cup in which the filling is placed and then covered up with the outer dough. So make a ball of the white rice dough. Hold it in your fingers and press a crater with the thumbs. Rotate the dough between the thumb and fingers until the rice base is thin and you have a cup shape.
5. The round cups with the pointed top is filled with the coconut, jaggery fudge. The oval shaped cup is for the spicy urad dhal filling.
6. Steam the *Kuzhakattais* in idli-moulds (place 4 or 5 in each mould) after pre-heating the water in the rice cooker. Within 7-8 minutes, you will observe tiny beads of water forming all round the *Kuzhakattais*. If the Kuzhakattais are undercooked the rice flour covering will be sticky. If so, reheat in a microwave for 2 minutes with the lid off.

Tasty tip: Making Kuzhakattais is an art. It needs practice and deftness.

Timely tip: Okay! You can cheat with moulds that are available to make these parcels. The final effect may not be optimum. A good way to start though.

Preparing a kozhakattai
Pgs 96/97/98

Ulutham Poornam kozhakattai-pg 98

Thengai Poornam kozhakattai-pg 97

Verkadalai Sundal-pg 102

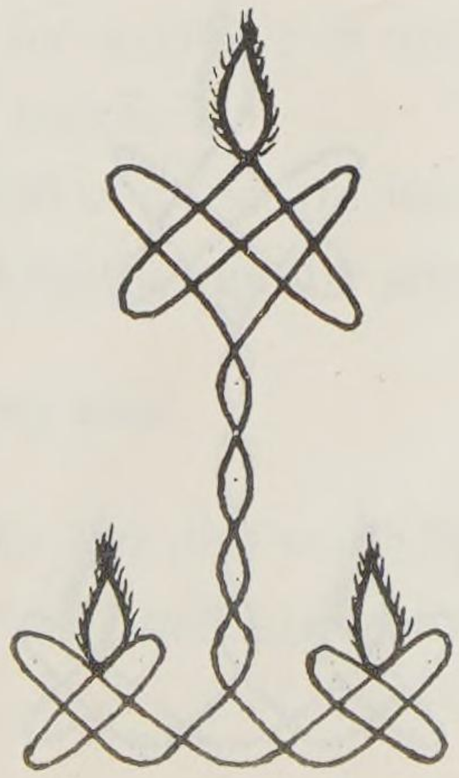
Thengai Poornam Kuzhakattai

sweet filling for parcels

3 cups grated	**Coconut**
1½ cups	**Jaggery, powdered**
½ teaspoon	**Cardamom/Elaichi powder**
¾ cup	**Water**

1. Add water to jaggery and melt over a low flame.
2. Strain to remove the scum. Set aside.
3. In a deep non-stick pan, add the jaggery and the grated coconut and keep stirring for 5-7 minutes on medium heat.
4. When the water evaporates, lower the heat, add the cardamom powder and continue to stir for 7-8 minutes or until it turns into a sticky fudge.
5. When it swirls round into a sticky mass, remove from fire and scoop into a bowl.
6. Prepare small lime size balls to use as kuzhakattai filling. Follow recipe on page 39 to prepare the outer filling and the method to make the parcels. Finish off with a pointed top.

Timely tip: *Add a spoon of clarified butter/ghee in the final stages of making the fudge.*



Ulutham Poornam Kuzhakattai

savoury filling for parcels

For the savoury filling:

¾ cup	Black gram/White urad dhal
3-4	Green chillies
1/3 teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon	Salt
1 teaspoon	Oil

1. Soak the dhal in 2 cups of hot water for about 20 minutes. Drain off the water and blend into a very coarse batter with chillies, asafoetida powder and salt.
2. Steam this paste in a dish placed in the rice-cooker for about 15-20 minutes or when a wooden pick/fork inserted in the center comes out clean.
3. Scoop into a plate and cut into pieces. Allow to cool for about 5 minutes.
4. Crumble the steamed usili to ensure no lumps remain. Set aside.
5. In a deep non-stick saucepan, heat the oil and pop the mustard.
6. Add the crumbled usili and gently stir over a low fire for a minute. Set aside.
7. Use this filling for the savoury *Kuzhakattais*.
8. Follow the recipe (pg-39) to prepare the kuzhakattais.
9. Use the boat-shaped dough base and fill with this savoury crumble.

Timely tip: Flatten the batter in a wide dish and zap it in a microwave on high for 2 minutes.

Mani Kuzhakattai steamed rice marbles

2 cups	Rice
¾ cup split	Black gram/White urad dhal
3-4	Green chillies
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder
¼ teaspoon	Cayenne pepper/Chilly powder
¼ cup	Grated coconut
¼ teaspoon	Mustard/Rai seeds
A few	Curry leaves
2 tablespoons	Cilantro/Coriander leaf
4 tablespoons	Oil
½ teaspoon	Salt

1. Soak the dhal in 2 cups of hot water for 20 minutes. Drain the water and blend into a very coarse batter with green chillies, asafoetida powder and salt.
2. Steam this batter in a dish placed in the rice-cooker for about 15-20 minutes or until a wooden pick/fork inserted inside the batter comes out clean. Scoop it out into a flat plate and cut into pieces and allow to cool for about 5 minutes.
3. Crumble it and ensure that no lumps remain.
4. Prepare the rice batter as instructed in (p-96).
5. Add a ¼ teaspoon of chilly powder and a pinch of asafoetida powder and mix the base dough thoroughly using your palms. Grease palms with oil; hold the wet rice dough between the palms and roll it into a thin cord.
6. Make marble-sized balls and steam by heaping them in the *idli-moulds* for about 8-10 minutes. The small marbles steam faster.
7. Open the lid of the cooker and when you notice the beads of water formed on it. Remove and gently drop them into a bowl. Once it cools, separate the marbles sticking together. Set aside.
8. Heat some oil in a deep skillet and pop the mustard. Now add some of the curry leaves, the crumbled dhal and stir. Add the grated coconut. Add a pinch more of chilly powder if you like it spicier.
9. Gently stir them all together for a couple of minutes making certain that the dal remains crumbly and soft to touch.
10. Add the steamed balls and rest of the curry leaves and finely chopped coriander leaves into the pan. Stir all together gently and well. Switch off the flame.

Serve as a delicious snack or as an evening meal.

Timely tip: *While preparing the base for this dish you may add all the required spices to the thinly blended rice to make a dough. Omit the usili and season the marbles with mustard, asafoetida, curry leaves, chilly powder and sauté.*

Sundal – Whole grain Salads

Soaked and sprouted whole grains are part of the cuisine of South India. They are mainly associated with festive occasions. The modern dish incorporates newer ingredients and flavours.

Kothu Kadalai Sundal chick pea toss

1½ cups	Chick pea/Kabuli chana
2 tablespoons	Grated coconut
½ cup	Raw mango, chopped/grated coarse (optional)
½ cup	Cilantro/Coriander leaves
¼ teaspoon	Salt
1 teaspoon	Oil

For the spice powder:

2	Red chillies
2 tablespoons	Coriander seeds/Dhania

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon split	Black gram/White urad dhal
A few	Curry leaves
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder

1. Soak the chick peas for 8 hours.
2. Cook with a little salt until soft and set aside. Alternatively, pressure-cook for three to four whistles.
3. Roast the coriander seeds and red chillies in half teaspoon oil for a few seconds and blend into a coarse powder. Set aside.
4. Peel and chop the mango into small cubes. Heat the oil, pop the mustard and brown the urad dhal. Add the curry leaves and asafoetida/hing powder.
5. Add the boiled chick peas, spice powder and required salt.
6. Remove from the stove. Add the chopped mango, coconut and finely chopped coriander leaves and mix well.

Serve this delicious tangy snack hot or cold.

Timely tip: Add 1½ teaspoons of lime juice instead of mango pieces. In the US tinned chick peas are readily available. Saves time to make instant sundal.

Makka Cholam Sundal corn salad

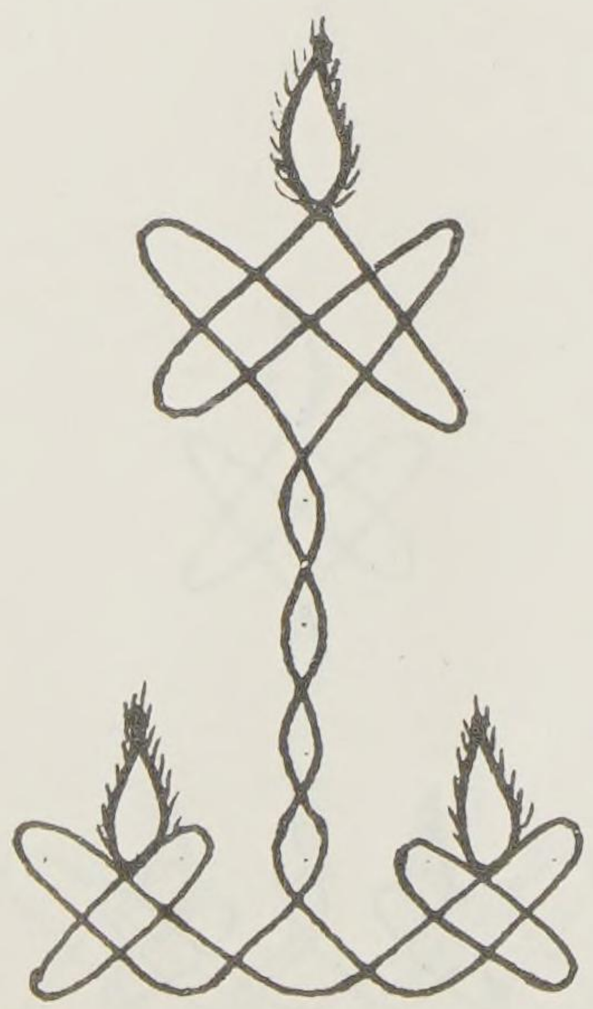
2	Corn on cob
½ teaspoon	Salt

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	Mustard seeds/Rai
½ teaspoon split	Black gram/White urad dhal
¼ teaspoon	Turmeric/Haldi powder
¼ teaspoon	Cayenne pepper/Chilly powder
A few	Curry leaves
¼ teaspoon	Asafoetida/Hing powder

1. Remove the outer leaves of the corn.
2. Break into two and steam with salt until soft and cooked. Remove the corn kernels with a sharp knife.
4. Heat oil and pop the mustard seeds; and brown the dhal.
5. Over a medium flame add the turmeric powder the corn, asafoetida powder and curry leaves. Stir for a minute and switch off the flame.

Timely tip: This sundal can also be prepared with tinned or frozen corn.



Verkadalai Sundal peanut salad

1½ cups	**Whole peanuts**
½ teaspoon	**Salt**

For the seasoning:

¼ teaspoon	**Mustard seeds/Rai**
½ teaspoon split	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
¼ teaspoon	**Turmeric/Haldi powder**
¼ teaspoon	**Cayenne pepper/Chilly powder**
A few	**Curry leaves torn into half**
2 tablespoons	**Cilantro/Coriander leaves, chopped fine (optional)**
¼ teaspoon	**Asafoetida/Hing powder**

1. Soak 1½ cups of peanuts in boiling water for 4 to 5 hours and steam with salt in 4 cups of water. (Or, pressure cooker for 3 whistles).
2. Heat the oil, pop the mustard and brown the dhal. Add curry leaves and the cooked peanuts.
3. Add turmeric powder, chilly powder asafoetida and salt if required. Stir for 2 minutes. Switch off the flame.

Garnish with coriander leaves and serve hot or cooled.

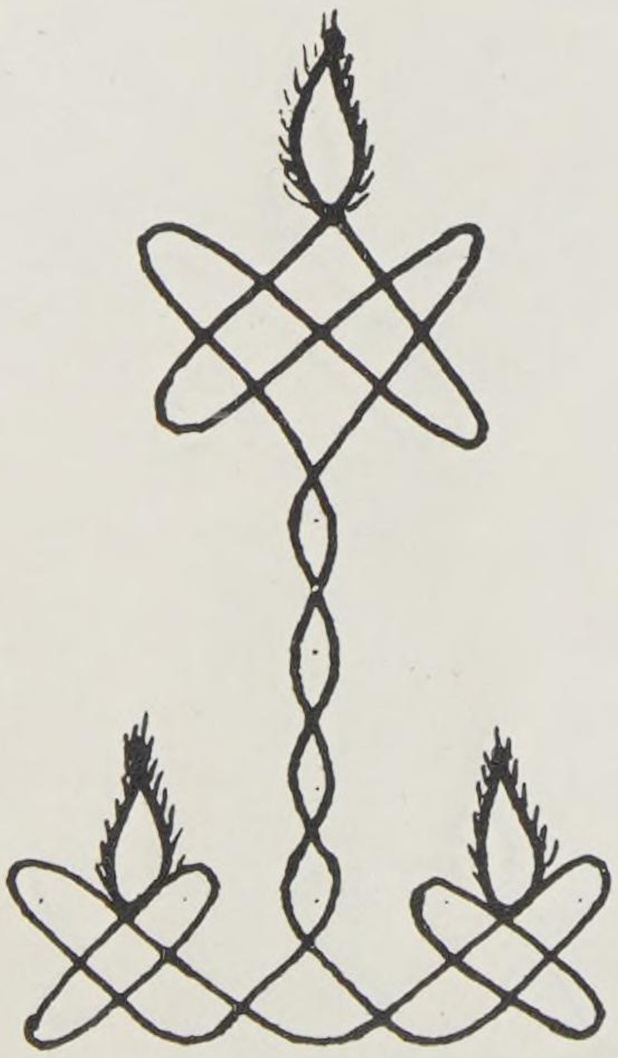
Healthy Tip: Sundals can be prepared with fresh field beans, brown chick peas, fresh peas, bengal gram/chana dal, green gram/moong dal For some you can add pitlai powder and for some even sambhar powder instead of cayenne pepper. A healthy evening snack that can be substituted for supper.

The Sweet Touch

A meal in South India, especially a festive or celebratory one begins with a dab of something sweet on the banana leaf or plate. The daily meal however does not feature a regular sweet dish.

Payasam in Sanskrit means a rice pudding. It is usually an offering to the Gods before it is served in a meal. The recipe for the popular English rice pudding was, in fact, derived from *payasam.*

Vadai, payasam and *pachadi* are the special items cooked when guests are expected. The *payasam* has many variations and is cooked with sugar or jaggery. It may be milk based or dhal based but newer ingredients are being experimented in the modern kitchen.



Paal Payasam rice pudding

2½ litres	**Full cream milk**
¾ cup	**Sugar**
3 tablespoons	**Rice**
2 tablespoons	**Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)**

1. Wash and wipe the rice with a dry cloth. Heat the ghee and stir the rice for a few seconds.
2. Add the milk and boil in a deep saucepan.
3. Keep stirring over a medium flame until it thickens to three-fourth the original quantity.
4. Add the sugar and stir until it dissolves and remove from fire. Serve hot.

Serve in little cups.

Tasty Tip: This payasam does not require any extra flavouring like saffron, cardamom powder, pistachio, cashew and almond slivers or condensed milk. However, they can be added.

Timely tip: Boil in a pressure cooker for 4 to 6 whistles to speed up the process. Remember to place a milk saver or slotted spoon or plate in the milk to prevent overflowing. Open the lid and continue to simmer in the cooker itself.

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Semia Payasam-pg 105

Paal Poli-pg 109

Rava Kesari-pg 113

Shakkarai Pongal-pg 116

Akkaara Vadasal-pg 110

Semia Payasam saffron and vermicelli dessert

2 litres	**Full cream milk/Half and half**
¾ cup	**Vermicelli/Semia**
½ cup	**Sugar**
2 tablespoons	**Cashewnuts**
1 tablespoon	**Raisins/Kismis**
A few strands	**Saffron/Kesar**
½ teaspoon	**Cardamom/Elaichi powder**
1 tablespoon	**Clarified butter/Ghee (Pg-117)**

1. In a deep saucepan boil the milk and lower the flame. Stir for 3-4 minutes and take it off the stove.
2. Break cashew into medium pieces and brown in a teaspoon of ghee.
3. Add the raisins and stir continuously till the fruit puffs up. Remove from stove.
4. Prepare the saffron by mashing it in a tablespoon of hot milk until the milk turns a deep orange.
5. Heat a teaspoon of ghee and fry the vermicelli for a minute.
6. Add a cup of water, cover and simmer for 6-7 minutes.
7. Stir occasionally until the vermicelli is soft but firm.
8. Add the sugar and stir until it dissolves before adding the milk.
9. Add the cardamom powder, fried cashew, raisins and the saffron liquid.
10. Simmer for 3 minutes over a medium flame so that the *payasam* is thick and creamy.

Serve hot or cold.

***Tasty Tip:** Keep some of the fried dry fruits and use as garnish if you are serving individual helpings. They can also be used to decorate the top of the dessert in a large bowl and placed on a buffet meal table.*

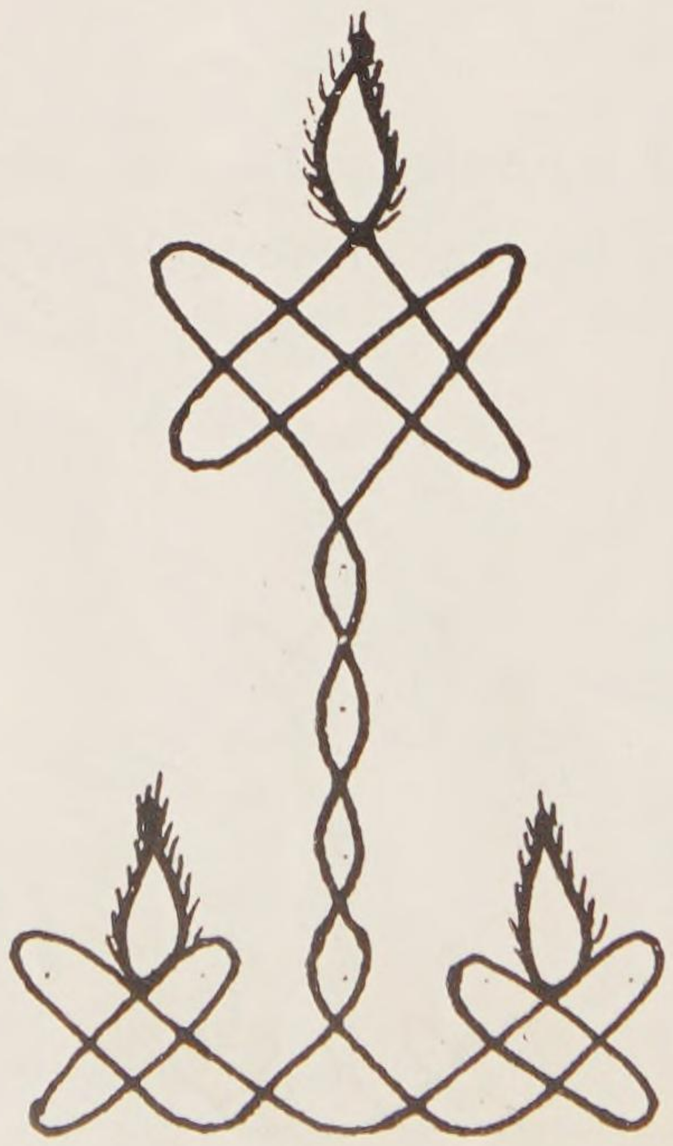
Carrot Mundhiri Payasam carrot-cashew dessert

1 litre	Full cream milk
2 cups	Carrots, grated
1 cup	Cashewnuts
½ teaspoon	Cardamom/Elaichi powder
¾ cup	Sugar
2 tablespoons	Clarified butter/Ghee (Pg-117)

1. Soak cashew in water for half an hour. Blend coarsely and set aside.
2. Heat the milk over a medium flame until it thickens. Add the sugar and stir until it dissolves.
3. Place the grated carrots in half a cup of water or milk and steam or zap in a microwave for 3 minutes until soft, and add to the boiling milk.
4. Add the cashew paste, cardamom powder and boil for 4-5 minutes. Add the ghee and remove from fire.

Serve cooled

Tasty Tip: You can add condensed milk to the thickened milk for extra richness. Make sure to reduce the sugar to 1/3 cup.



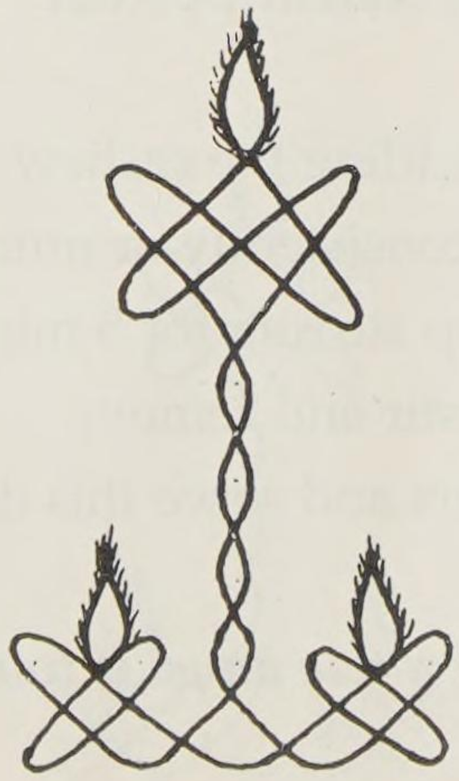
Kasa Kasa Payasam poppy seed pudding

1½ litres	Full cream milk
¾ cup	Sugar
2 tablespoons	Poppy seed/Khus khus
10-12 pieces	Cashewnuts
1 tablespoon	Grated coconut
A pinch	Nutmeg powder
A few strands	Saffron/Kesar

1. Soak the khus khus in a teaspoon of water for 15 minutes and blend into a fine paste with the cashewnuts and grated coconut.
2. Prepare the saffron by mashing it in a little hot milk until the milk turns a deep orange.
3. Stir the milk over a medium flame and thicken to three fourths of original quantity.
4. Add sugar and boil for a couple of minutes.
5. Mix the blended paste with a little cold milk to remove lumps and add to the boiling milk.
6. Mix well to get a uniform consistency. Add the saffron liquid and stir in the nutmeg powder.

Serve hot or cold.

Timely tip: Take care that the payasam does not burn at the botton. Use a non-stick pan.



Aval Payasam quick beaten rice dessert

1½ litres	Full cream milk
½ cup	Beaten rice/Poha thick variety
½ cup	Sugar
1 tablespoon	Clarified butter/ghee (pg-117)
½ teaspoon	Cardamom/Elaichi powder
A few strands	Saffron/Kesar

1. Prepare the saffron by mashing it in hot milk until the milk turns dark orange. Keep aside.
2. Stir the beaten rice in a teaspoon of melted ghee for 15 seconds. Heat a cup of water and boil the rice for a couple of minutes or until it turns very soft.
3. Add the sugar and boil for a couple of minutes to dissolve.
4. Add the milk and stir for 5 minutes until the milk thickens a little. Add the saffron liquid and cardamom powder and stir for 20 seconds.

Serve this dish hot or cold

Basundhi rich creamy dessert

3 litres	Full cream milk/Half and Half
1 cup	Sugar
¼ cup	Pistachios slivered
2 tablespoons	Cashewnuts chopped small
½ teaspoon	Cardamom/Elaichi powder

1. In a deep pan heat the milk adding the cashew and when it begins to boil lower the heat and stir for 15 minutes consistently or until it thickens to half the original the quantity. Add sugar and keep stirring for 5 minutes until it dissolves.
2. Add the cardamom powder stir and remove.
3. Garnish with pistachios slivers and serve this dish hot or cold.

Timely tip: It can be refrigerated for a few days. If too thick you may add a little milk and serve.

Paal Poli fried pancakes in milk

½ cup	Plain flour
1cup	Semolina/Sooji
1/3 cup	Lukewarm water
1½ litre	Full cream milk
400 grams	Condensed milk (optional)
½ cup	Sugar
A few strands	Saffron/Kesar
½ teaspoon	Cardamom/Elaichi powdered
¼ litre	Oil, for deep frying

1. Knead and prepare a soft dough by adding flour, semolina, water and 2 teaspoons oil. Cover and keep aside for 15 minutes.
2. Divide into lemon-sized balls and roll out into thin pancakes. Dust flour on both sides and roll out into pancakes.
3. Quarter the pancake with a knife and deep fry over a medium fire.
4. Turn them gently with a slotted spoon and remove from oil when light golden in colour. Place them in a dish spread with absorbent paper.
5. Mash the saffron in 2 tablespoons of hot milk until it is dissolved and the milk turns a dark orange.
6. Boil the milk and stir for 3 more minutes until a little thickened. Add and dissolve the sugar. Add the condensed milk. Reduce the sugar to one third the quantity. Add in the cardamom powder and saffron milk and stir for 15 seconds.
7. Toss in the fried pooris/puffed pancakes to the milk and stir for 3 minutes. Switch off the flame.
8. Allow to soak in the milk for 15 to 20 minutes before serving.

Akkaara Vadasal rice and dhal pudding

1 cup	**Rice**
1 tablespoon split	**Green gram/Moong dhal split, husked**
2 cups	**Milk**
½ cup	**Jaggery/Brown sugar**
4 tablespoons	**Sugar**
A few strands	**Saffron/Kesar**
¼ cup	**Grated coconut**
2 tablespoons chopped	**Cashewnuts**
¼ teaspoon	**Cardamom/Elaichi powder**
3 tablespoons	**Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)**

1. Cook the rice and the dhal in 3½ cups of water until mushy. Or pressure-cook for 3-4 whistles. Set aside.
2. Add a quarter cup of water to jaggery and melt over a low flame. Strain to remove the scum.
3. Prepare the saffron by mashing it in a little hot milk until the milk turns a deep orange.
4. Boil the milk over a medium flame and thicken to three-fourths the original quantity.
5. Add the cooked rice and dhal, jaggery, sugar, coconut, cashewnuts and stir over a medium fire until it becomes a creamy dessert.
6. Add cardamom powder, saffron milk and ghee and remove from fire.

Serve hot.

Tasty Tip: Add 2 tablespoons extra sugar. You can substitute the sugar with Splenda. Condensed milk is a tasty option. Reduce the sugar content to one third the quantity.

Paal Adai Pradhamam steamed rice pasta in milk

2 litres	**Full cream milk**
1 cup	**Rice**
1½ cups	**Sugar**
½ teaspoon	**Cardamom/Elaichi powder**
A few	**Banana leaves/Foil paper**

1. Soak rice in water for 30 minutes. Drain water and blend into a fine thick batter of spreading consistency.
2. Spread the rice batter on banana leaves into thin pancakes. Place the banana leaves in an idli mould and steam for 10-15 minutes.
3. Scoop the steamed rice pancakes from the banana leaves. Cool and cut into smaller ribbons and then pieces like pasta.
4. Wash the pasta in cold water and set aside.
5. In a deep non-stick saucepan, heat the milk over a medium flame and add the steamed rice pieces and thicken to three quarters the original quantity.
6. Add sugar, cardamom and stir for 2-3 minutes.

This authentic Kerala dessert tastes good when served hot.

***Timely tip:** Remove the centre stalk of the banana leaf and cut into 6 inch long pieces and use. Use aluminium foil to steam if banana leaves are not available.*

Chakka Pradhamam jackfruit pudding in coconut milk

2½ cups chopped	Jackfruit, ripe
1 cup	Jaggery/Brown sugar
2 cups	Coconut milk
1 tablespoon	Coconut, chopped fine
1 tablespoon	Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)

1. Steam the jackfruit in a cup of water until soft. Blend and set aside.
2. Add a quarter cup of water to jaggery and melt over a low flame. Strain to remove the scum.
3. In a deep non-stick saucepan, add the jaggery liquid and blended jackfruit and stir over a low flame for 5-7 minutes or until it thickens slightly.
4. Add the coconut milk and stir for a couple of minutes.
5. Stir the chopped coconut in ghee clarified butter for a minute and add to the *pradhamam*.

Serve this delicious Kerala fruit dessert hot or cold. Makes a great spread for sandwiches!

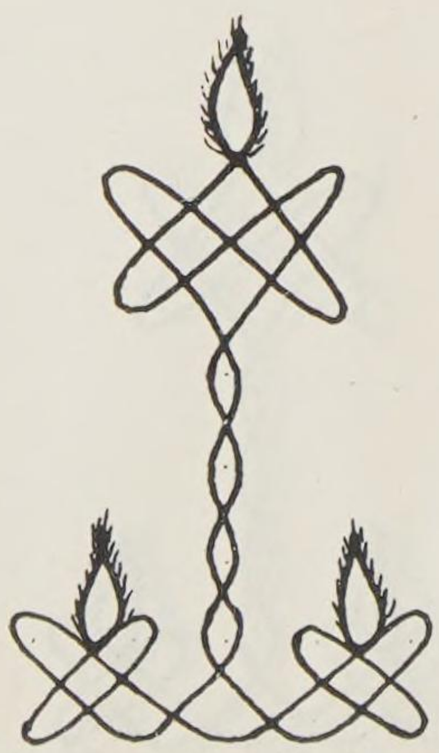
Timely tip: Substitute ripe bananas or pineapple chunks if jackfruit is unavailable.

Rava Kesari sweet semolina

1 cup	**Semolina/Sooji**
¾ cup	**Sugar**
2 cups	**Water**
1 tablespoon halved	**Cashewnuts**
1 tablespoon	**Raisins/Kismis**
½ teaspoon	**Cardamom/Elaichi powder**
2 tablespoons	**Milk**
A few strands	**Saffron/Kesar**
4 tablespoons	**Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)**

1 Roast the cashewnuts golden in half a teaspoon of ghee.
2 Add the raisins and fry for a few seconds until they puff up. Remove from the stove and set aside.
3 Prepare the saffron by mashing it in a little hot milk until the milk turns a deep orange.
4 Heat a teaspoon of ghee in a saucepan.
5 Add the semolina and stir over a low flame for 3-4 minutes.
6 Add 2 cups of boiling water and stir well until it leaves the sides of the saucepan. Set aside.
7 In another deep saucepan, add a cup of water to the sugar and boil over a medium flame until it dissolves and reaches one string consistency.
8 Add the semolina and stir until it turns sticky and leaves the sides of the saucepan while the ghee separates from the mass.
9 Add cardamom powder, fried cashewnuts, raisins, saffron and remaining ghee.

Serve hot in moulded shapes made with a deep ladle or katori/small dessert cups. Try an ice cream scoop!



Thiruvaadharai Kali jaggery rice crumble

This dish is made in honour of Lord Siva in the month of December

2 cups	**Rice**
3 cups	**Jaggery/Brown Sugar**
2 tablespoons	**Cashewnuts**
2 tablespoons	**Raisins/Kismis**
½ cup	**Grated coconut**
½ teaspoon	**Cardamom/Elaichi powder**
6 tablespoons	**Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117.)**

1. Roast the unwashed rice on a medium flame for 10-12 minutes until deep golden in colour. Coarsely powder it in a blender.
2. Cook in 5 ½ cups of water stirring occasionally to avoid lumps. Keep aside.
3. Quarter the cashews and roast in a tablespoon of ghee until golden. Add the raisins for 10 seconds until they puff up.
4. Over a medium flame, heat a cup of water in a deep non-stick pan.
5. Add the jaggery/brown sugar to melt. Strain to remove scum.
6. Return to the stove and add the steamed rice, grated coconut and cashew stirring continuously until it becomes a soft crumble.
7. Add the cardamom powder and a tablespoon of ghee. Stir for a minute more until it mixes well.
8. Add the rest of the ghee, stir and garnish with raisins.

Tasty Tip: *It tastes good whether hot or cold. Serve it as an innovative dessert by moulding it into cup shapes.*

Badhaam Halwa saffron almond fudge

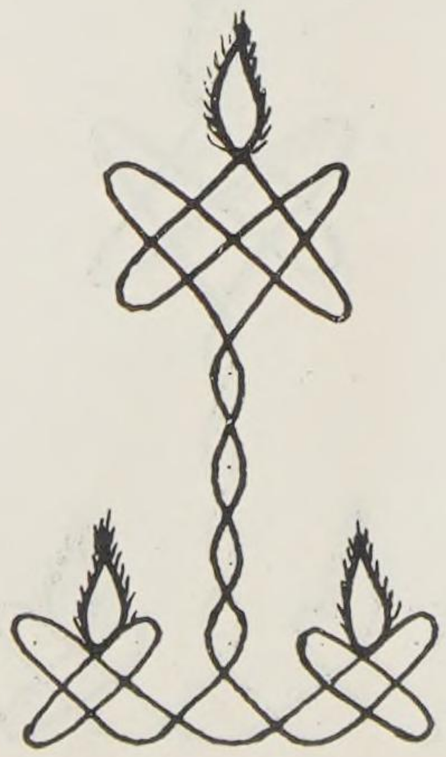
2½ cups	Almonds/Badhaam
1¾ cups	Sugar
1 cup	Milk
A few strands	Saffron/Kesar
1 cup	Clarified butter/Ghee (Pg-117)

1. Soak the almonds in hot water for 30 minutes. Peel and blend into a coarse paste, using very little milk and set aside.
2. Prepare the saffron by mashing it in a little warm milk until the milk turns a deep orange.
3. In a deep non-stick saucepan, mix the sugar and almond paste and stir over medium fire for 5-7 minutes.
4. Add the milk and keep stirring until the paste thickens and begins to leave the sides of the saucepan. Add the saffron liquid and freshly melted Ghee.
5. Stir for a minute and remove from fire.

Serve this fudge hot or cold. Wrap them up in butter or toffee paper or serve in tiny paper cups.

***Timely tip:** Soak the almonds in a little water and microwave for a couple of minutes. Remove and peel.*

***Tasty Tip:** Heat a tablespoon of the fudge in a microwave for 10 seconds. Briskly scoop in a serving of vanilla ice cream over it. Serve immediately. An excellent dessert!*



Shakkarai Pongal sweet rice and dal mélange

2 cups	**Rice**
1 tablespoon	**Green gram/Yellow moong dhal**
2 cups	**Jaggery/Gur/Vellam powdered**
1 cup	**Milk**
1 cup	**Cashewnuts**
2 tablespoons	**Raisins**
½ teaspoon	**Cardamom/Elaichi powder**
6-7 tablespoons	**Clarified butter/Ghee (pg-117)**

1. Roast the moong dhal in a pan for a few seconds until the aroma rises.
2. Mix with the rice, wash well and cook in 6½ cups of water until very soft. (Or, pressure cook for 2-3 whistles.)
3. Halve the cashewnuts and roast in a tablespoon ghee until light golden,
4. Now add the raisins and fry for a few seconds until they puff up.
5. Take off the flame and set aside. Add a cup of water to jaggery and melt over a low flame. Strain to remove scum.
6. Return to flame and add the cooked rice and dhal, stirring continuously as it turns into a fudge.
7. Add the cardamom powder and remaining ghee. Place in a serving dish and garnish with the roasted cashewnuts and raisins.

Serve hot or cooled.

Neiy Clarified Butter/Ghee

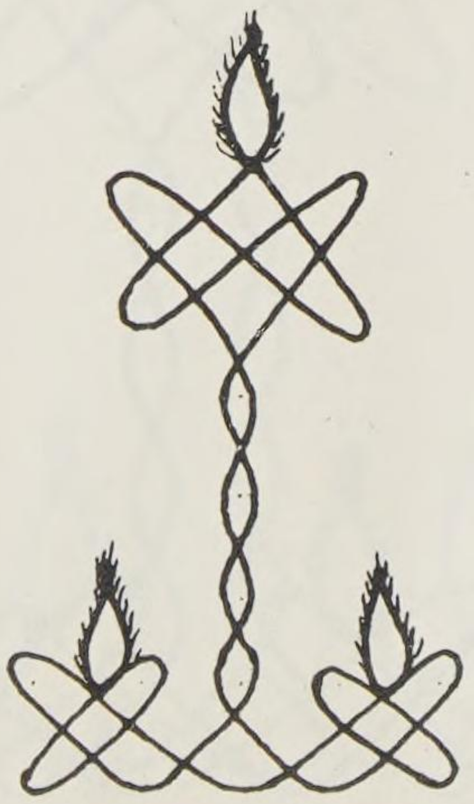
the making of ghee

Ghee is a traditional medium for frying food. It is served as a topping for white rice and gravy in a South Indian menu. There are 2 basic varieties: ghee prepared with unsalted butter or ghee made from vegetable shortening. Ghee prepared at home with unsalted butter is wholesome and delicious.

1. Place 500 grams of unsalted butter in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over a moderate heat.
2. When it melts and comes to a boil, lower the heat stirring all the time.
3. In about 15 minutes the moisture evaporates.
4. Skim the froth occasionally with a ladle from the top, till it turns deep golden in colour.
5. Quickly remove from the flame and cool it for 10 minutes.
6. Carefully strain the contents into a container with a firm lid discarding the black residue at the bottom of the pan.

Timely Tip: Unlike other oils, ghee will set into a yellow semi-solid as it cools, especially so in a cold climate. Do not refrigerate; it remains fresh for almost a month.

Tasty Tip: Melt small quantities of the ghee to serve whenever required.



Podis: Piquant Powders

Spice powders are an important taste-enhancers in South Indian cuisine. The recipes are handed down from generation to generation and can have a distinctive stamp of a particular region or family.

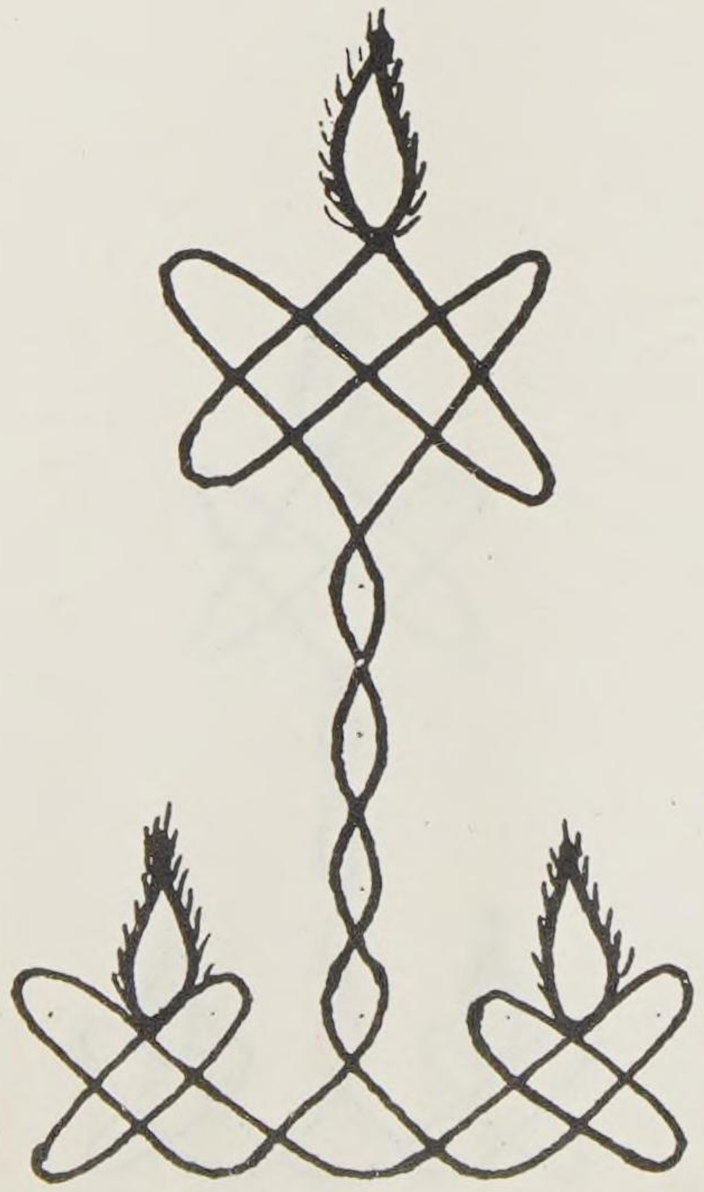
The spice *podis* have several uses: to add flavour and texture to a gravy or vegetable in the cooking; as accompaniments to plain rice; and special ones are an integral accompaniment to a tiffin. Many of these powders are easily available in branded sachets at stores.

The asafoetida lumps add a distinctive flavour to the powders. You can substitute it with the powder variety in a generous proportion.

Sambhar Podi an all spice powder

3 cups	Coriander seeds/Dhania
1 cup	Red gram/Thuvar dhal
½ cup	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
½ cup,	Black gram/White urad dhal
¼ cup	Fenugreek seeds/Methi
¼ cup	Mustard seeds/Rai
2 tablespoons	Cumin seeds/Jeera
½ cup	Red chillies
¼ cup	Peppercorns/Kali Mirch
½ cup	Curry leaves
8	Long thin turmeric pieces (or 3 tablespoons turmeric powder)

1. Wash and wipe the curry leaves dry.
2. Roast all the ingredients in a saucepan over a medium flame for a couple of minutes until the dhals turn light golden and start emitting their distinctive aromas.
3. Blend all the ingredients into a fine powder.
4. Store in an airtight container. You can refrigerate it as well.



Pitlai Podi tastemaker

3 cups	Coriander seeds/Dhania
1 cup	Bengal gram/Chana dhal
¾ cup	Red chillies
5	Asafoetida/Hing blocks, marble-sized/powder
2 cups	Coconut grated
2 teaspoons	Oil

1. Heat a teaspoon of oil over a medium heat and roast the coriander seeds, chana dhal and red chillies until the dhal turns golden.
2. Heat ½ teaspoon oil and roast the asafoetida blocks. Crush them into small pieces with a spatula so that the insides are roasted as well.
3. Heat the remaining oil and roast the grated coconut until golden in colour.
4. Blend all the ingredients into a coarse powder.
5. Store in a bottle.

Healthy Tip: Omit the coconut and use an extra half cup coriander.

Idli-dosai Milagai Podi

spicy gunpowder/spicy tiffin powder

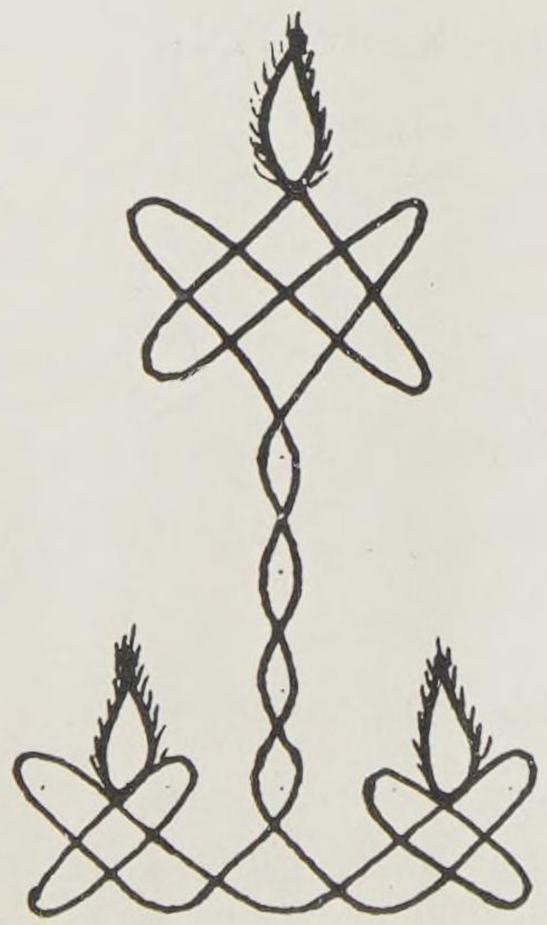
2 cups	**Bengal gram/Chana dhal**
1 cup	**Black gram/White urad dhal**
1 tablespoon	**Coriander seeds/Dhania**
½ cup	**Red chillies**
2 marble-sized	**Asafoetida/Hing blocks**

1. Heat ½ teaspoon oil and roast the asafoetida blocks. Crush them into small pieces with a spatula so that the insides are roasted as well.
2. Heat the remaining oil and roast the rest of the spices on a low flame, except the salt, until the dhals turn golden in colour.
3. Blend all the ingredients into a coarse powder.
4. Store in a bottle and use within a month to get that fresh taste.

Serve mixed in oil as a side dish for idli (pg-78.) and dosai (pg-80).

Tasty Tip: A little extra salt may be needed because it is eaten with a spoon of sesame oil
In some families a tablespoon of sesame seeds/til is roasted and added to the powder.

In Tanjore district a small piece of tamarind is roasted and powdered with the other ingredients.
A piece of jaggery too is added.



Kothamalli Podi fresh coriander leaf spice powder

4 cups	Coriander leaves/Cilantro
Small marble-sized	Tamarind
5-6	Red chillies
4, marble-sized	Asafoetida/Hing block
½ cup	Black gram/White urad dhal
1¼ teaspoons	Salt
2 teaspoons	Oil

1. Wash the coriander leaves and wipe them.
2. Heat ½ teaspoon oil and roast the asafoetida blocks. Crush them into small pieces with a spatula so that the insides are roasted as well.
3. Heat the remaining oil and roast the red chillies.
6. Remove the chillies as soon as they turn bright red in colour.
7. Brown the urad dhal in the same oil.
8. Blend all the ingredients into a coarse powder and store in a bottle.
9. You may also pound the powder in a large-sized mortar and pestle.

Serve as an accompaniment to hot rice with a dollop of ghee!

Karuveippillai Podi curry leaf spice powder

7 cups	Curry leaves
1 tablespoon	Peppercorns/Kali mirch
1 tablespoon	Cumin seeds/Jeera
2 tablespoons	Oil
1¼ teaspoons	Salt

1. Roast the curry leaves in a tablespoon of oil for 5 minutes.
2. Add the peppercorns and cumin seeds and continue to roast for a couple of minutes.
3. Put in the salt and blend into a coarse powder.

Serve as an accompaniment to hot rice with ghee. Goes well with curd rice as well!

Thiruvaadharai Kali-pg 114

adhaam Halwa-pg 115

Makka Cholam Sundal-pg 101

Asafoetida block/
Perungay / Hing

Ashgourd/Pooshinikkai

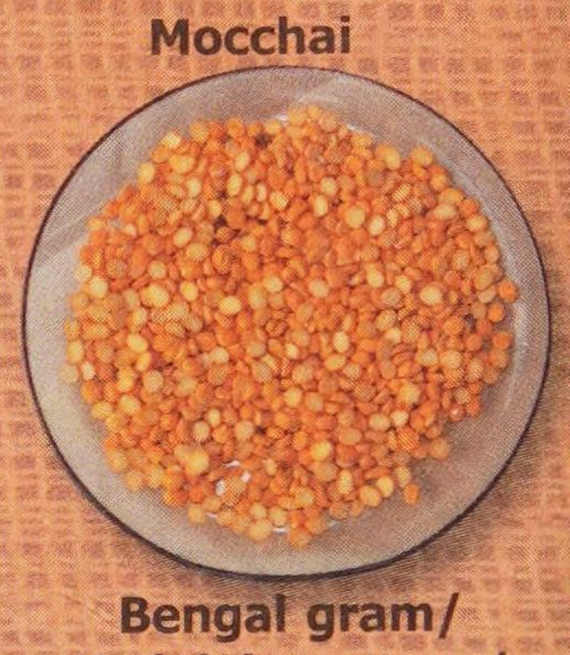
Black gram/Ulutham
paruppu/Urad dhal

Black eyed beans/
Mocchai

Banana flower/
vazhaipoo

Banana stem/
Vazhai thandu

Beaten rice/
Aval/Poha

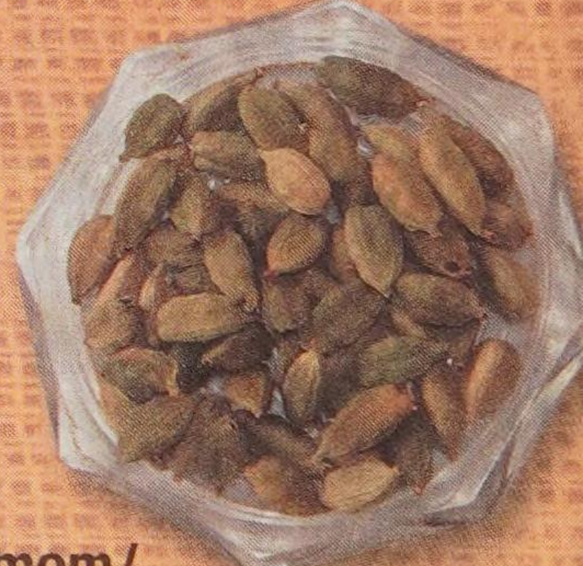


Bengal gram/
Kadalai paruppu/
Chana dhal

Broad beans/
Avaraikkai

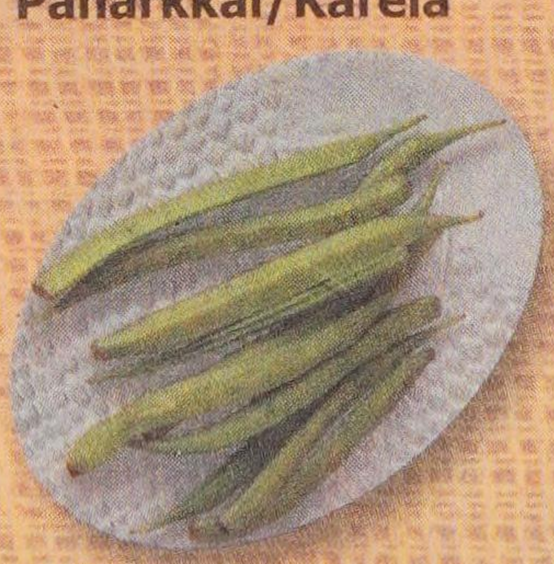
Bitter gourd/
Paharkkai/Karela

Bottle gourd/
Soraikkai/Lauki

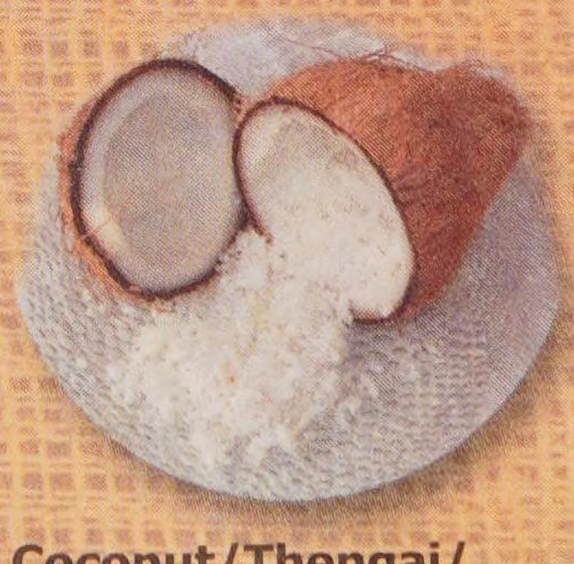


Cardamom/
Elaikkai/Elaichi

Clarified butter/
Neiy/Ghee



Cluster beans/
kothavaraikkai

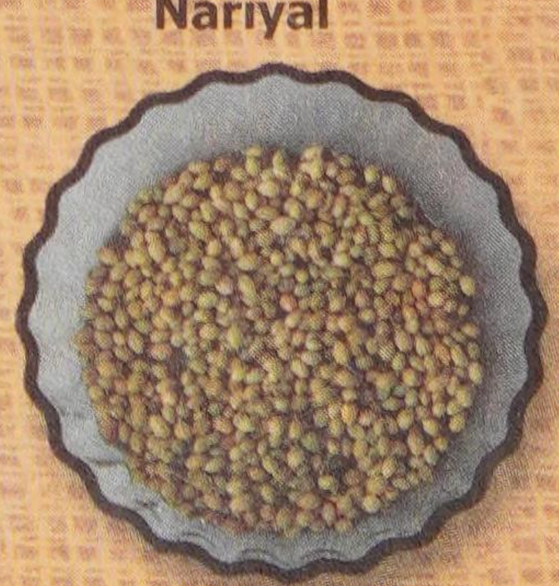


Coconut/Thengai/
Nariyal

Cloves/Lavangam/
Lavang

Taro root/Sepang
kizhangu

Curry leaves
Karuveipillai /Karipatha



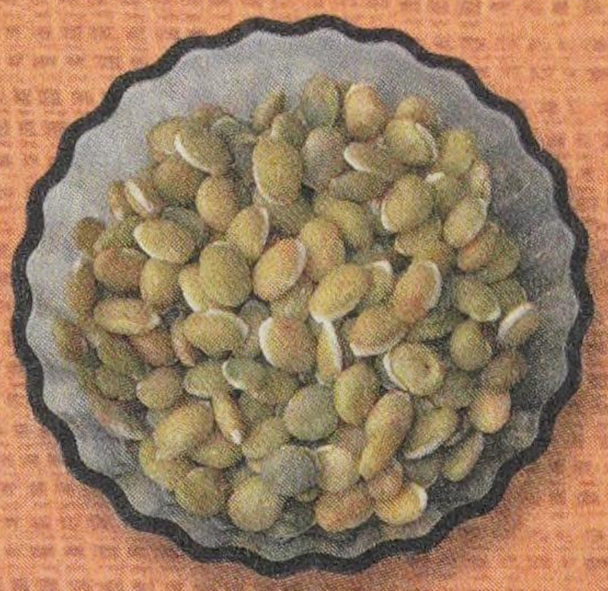
Coriander seeds/
Dhania

Drumsticks/
Murungaikkai

Egg plant/
Kathirikkai/
Baingan

Fenugreek leaves/
Menthiya keerai/Hari Methi

Fenugreek seeds/
Menthiyam/Methi



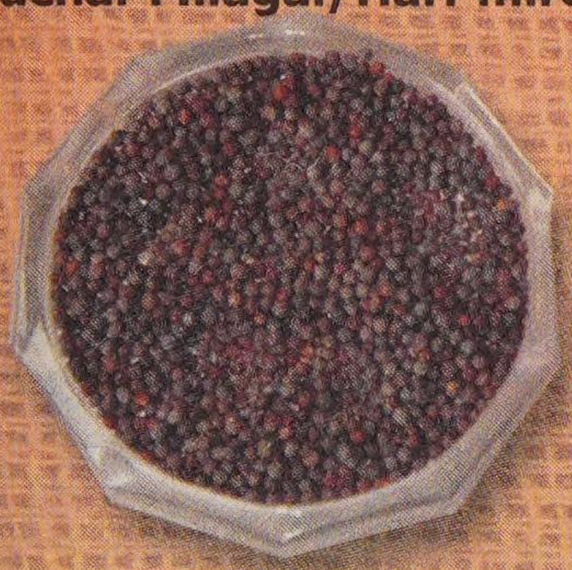
Field beans/Mocchai

Green chillies/
Pachai Milagai/Hari mirch

Green squash/
Chow chow

Ginger/Inji/Adrak

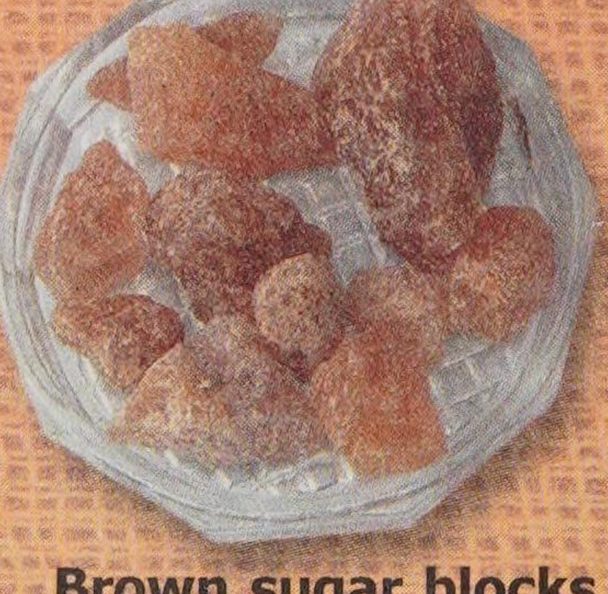
Jaggery/Vellum/Gur



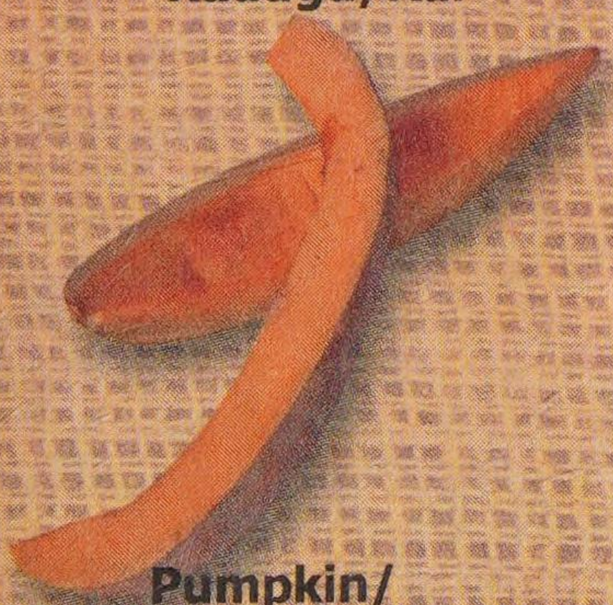
Mustard seeds(brown)/
Kadugu/Rai

Okra/Vendaikkai/
Bhindi

Brown sugar crystals/
Panam kalkandu



Brown sugar blocks



Pumpkin/
Parangikkai/Kaddhu

Raw banana/
Vazhaikkai/Kacha Kela

Red chillies/Milagai
vathal/Lal mirch

Red Gram/Thuvaram
paruppu/Thuvar Dhal

Ridge gourd/
Peerkangai

Fried gram/Pottu
kadalai/Bhunna chana

Saffron/Kunguma poo/
Kesar

Sago/Jevvarisi/
Sooji

Black Sesame/
Karuppu Yellu

White Sesame/
Vellai Yellu

Snake gourd/
Pudalangai

Amaranth leaves/
Spinach/Mulai keerai

Tamarind skin/
Puli/Imli

Turmeric/Manjal/
Haldi

Vermicelli/Semia/
Sevian

Small Yam/
Pudi karnai

Zedoary/
Maangai Inji

Note Pad

Note Pad

The tongue and palate craves for the variety that was available in terms of vegetables and their myriad preparations. Then begins the endless stream of emails and phone calls asking for recipes that Moms find it difficult to express across cyber miles.

Viji Varadarajan has identified this niche demand. Her first book 'Samayal: Vegetarian dishes of South India' is in its Fifth edition and brings to book detailed but extremely simple recipes for daily meals, for guests and for experimenting with new tastes and dishes. In popularising this cuisine through easy-to-follow-methods and by banishing the myth that traditional Tamizh cooking is time consuming and tedious, she hopes that the now-gens will develop an interest to use and adapt this cuisine in their daily cooking.

The cooking makes use of all the modern equipment available in a 21st century kitchen. The dishes have been put together with a strong sense of the minimum time available to a cook in today's working person's world and the common ingredients found in an average kitchen.

Viji Varadarajan was trained to cook through the dual influences of her parental home and her husband's family's traditions. She has analysed the dishes from the point of view of nutrition and health and presents recipes that are perfectly balanced—low in fats and cholesterol and yet protein and vitamin rich. These recipes have been handed down and perfected in the kitchens and temples throughout South India.

Viji passionately felt that today's generation was losing out on an entire culture and decided to record for posterity the dishes of a Brahmin lifestyle. Many people today are searching for their roots and want to relearn and revisit the tastes and smells of their childhood or families. Many of these dishes are not to be had in restaurants and are served in only a few homes.

The recipes are for the run-of-the-mill vegetables transformed into plain or exotic dishes. "I learnt my cooking from my mother and mother-in-law. I have retained their instructions practically to the last word. I have recognized the need for the busy professional who needs to put together a meal in the minimum time frame. I have also tried to universalise the names of ingredients."

Viji is passionately fitness conscious and practices, yoga, swims, does aerobics and dances.

She has authored and published 2 other cook books:

Festival Samayal: An Offering To The Gods
A Healthy Taste of Indian Culture: Cooking With Yoghurt.

Memories Of Earlier Times...

Just going through the contents brings back memories of grandmothers' kitchens. Recipes like vazhaikkai puli kootu and kathirikkai rasa vaangi have become rarities! Little gems are to be found like the vendhiya dosai and pesarat. The cooking instructions are clear and simple and, you could recreate grandmom's specialities that are of great use to a greenhorn in the kitchen....The poondu rasam and the annasi pazha rasam are indeed lip-smacking good and not to mention the photographs that are sumptuous and mouth watering.

— The Hindu

Tamilian Cuisine Comes Alive

The book is a suitable substitute for your ladled hand in teaching the nuances of hard-core vegetarian cooking to novices. The books have visually appetizing photos that reiterates the Indian concept of food being associated with the divine....you can enjoy new recipes or rediscover dishes that you used to eat when you were young and have lost in the mists of corporate, urban life. Viji Varadarajan's vegetarian cookbooks are a treasure trove for those wanting to cook up traditional dishes.

— The Economic Times

Fresh Print BOOKS

These are South Indian recipes which are low in fats and cholesterol and strike a balance between nutrition health and taste!.....They are recipes handed down for several generations and perfected in temples in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. ....Varadarajan has put together the making of these dishes in an easy and practical format.

— The New Indian Express

Good Food The Traditional Way

The recipes are for run-of-the-mill vegetables transformed into plain or exotic dishes. The author's fervent desire to record and retain traditional food is palpable. "Food is associated with prasadam, the gift of the Gods. So food has to be prepared with devotion so that it can have the best sustained impact on the health and well-being of our families". .... The pictures shot by the photographer beautifully combine the element of the divine with appropiate icons and tastefully presented food.

— EvesTouch Magazine

Besides her love for languages Viji Varadarajan is a keen classical dancer. Her books showcases some of South India's best vegetarian culinary delights in a practical and easy format

— The Femina[illegible]ne

Viji Varadarajan's Cookbooks Serve Up Interesting Recipes

Viji an accomplished dancer and a director in he[illegible]'s engineering company has dedicatedly w[illegible]3 cookbooks.....packed with useful tips and gui[illegible]n everything from storing to using the microwave and t[illegible]e cooker....thoughtfully includes individual picture[illegible]e ingredients....the dishes whets the appetite.

— The GOODFOODLINE column of T[illegible]

P7-CJT-627

ISBN: 81-752[illegible]

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Rs.225.00